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WHOLE WORKS

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REV. W. BATES, D. D.

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WITH A

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

COPIOUS INDEX AND TABLE OF TEXTS ILLUSTRATED.

BY W. FARMER.

VOL. III.

CONTAINING:

I. THE EVERLASTING REST OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.
II. ON DIVINE MEDITATION.
III. ON THE FEAR OF GOD.
IV. THE FOUR LAST THINGS: VIZ. DEATH, JUDGMENT, HEAVEN, HELL, PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED AND APPLIED, IN SEVERAL DISCOURSES.

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THE

EVERLASTING REST

OF THE

SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

HEB. IV. 9.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

THE INTRODUCTION.

The coherence of the words. The doctrine and method of handling it propounded."

THE words are an inference from the foregoing part of the chapter, wherein the apostle doth by illustration and proof make a discovery to us of the future state of rest for the people of God. He makes use of a double illustration for this.

1st. God's sacred rest from the works of creation, from the 4th verse. "And God did rest the seventh day from all his works;" that is, after God had perfected the invisible and visible world, on the review of all his works, finding them very good, he took pleasure, he was satisfied in all those discoveries of his own perfections in the works of his hands; and this is said to be his rest. God always enjoyed his own glory and blessedness

even from eternity: but this rest here spoken of, hath respect to the precedent work of creation, and that joyful reflection that God made upon his own works; because they were according to the model of his infinite wisdom, he was infinitely pleased in them. Now this divine rest is produced here as an illustration of that rest that the saints shall enjoy in heaven, after all their works done for the glory of God here on earth.

2nd. The second illustration is from the rest that was promised to the Israelites in the land of Canaan; and the apostle speaks of this in the first verse, "let us therefore fear, lest a promise being made of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." And in the foregoing chapter he had been treating of this rest. They were at first harassed in Egypt with cruel oppression, and they were to pass through a waste and wild wilderness, wherein they were to have many hard and difficult journeys. To those that did believe, and obey according to that belief, Canaan was promised as a land of rest. Now this temporal Canaan was but a type of the heavenly Canaan, the land above, that flows indeed with milk and honey; that is, where holiness, and joy, and pleasure, are for ever in perfection. Now, saith the apostle, the earthly Canaan was to be a representative of that country above, which is prepared for the people of God. And indeed this was the wisdom of the Holy Spirit of God, to raise the thoughts and desires of men by temporal things to those which are eternal. This is the double illustration. The proof which the apostle urgeth here, that there is still a rest remaining for the people of God, is from hence, that after the Israelites were possessed of Canaan, yet the royal prophet David speaks of another rest, that unbelievers should be excluded from, and that believers should obtain. "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, to-day after so long a time as it is said, to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; for if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not after have spoken of another day; there remaineth a rest therefore to the people of God." If you will be obedient to his call, do not harden your hearts, through infidelity; if you will believe and be holy, you shall come to this rest, that indeed deserves that name, not like the rest in the land of Canaan. If indeed he had given them rest, David would not have spoken of another rest. If we had been possessed of it in the land of Canaan,

David would not have said, if you remain in disobedience and infidelity you shall not enter into it, but if you be obedient you shall possess it. But seeing David hath said so, I conclude, saith the apostle, "there remains therefore a rest to the people of God." The words that I have read to you do contain that which is the most powerful and the most comfortable motive to believe and obey the gospel, and to persevere in it, that can be offered to you, especially considering the state we are in of strangers, and of a continual warfare; there is nothing can be more desirable than to hear this, and that can give more vigour to our souls in the ways of God. There is an expression of Solomon applicable to this purpose, "as cold waters to the thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." This is good news from heaven, the country above, therefore infinitely refreshing to us in all the heat, trouble and toil that we are engaged in, in this suffering world; "there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

The doctrine that I shall insist upon from the words, is this, there is a divine and blessed rest that is reserved as a reward to the people of God. I call it divine, because it is an imitation of God's rest, and it remains, for it is reserved as a reward. In the opening of this, I will show you,

I. Who are they that are characterized by this title, the people of God, and who are qualified for this reward and rest, and have a title to it, and an interest in it.

II. The place of this rest where it shall be.

III. The excellencies of this rest. And then,

IV. Come to the application.

CHAP. I.

Who are the people of God, for whom heaven is reserved. They are such as he hath a propriety in: not upon common accounts only, but special and peculiar ones, viz. election, special redemption, and renovation. And such as unfeignedly consent to take him for their King, and yield a voluntary, persevering subjection to him.

I. FIRST, Consider who they are that are characterized here as heirs of this divine and blessed rest; and they are called the people of God. I shall not run forth into a long discourse of all those things that the scripture speaks concerning the heirs of heaven, and their qualifications: I shall restrain what I shall say to this title, The people of God, and this title includes,

i. God's propriety in them, they are his people.

ii. It concludes on their part, 1st. An unfeigned consent to take him for their King. And, 2nd. A voluntary persevering subjection to him.

i. God's people are those he hath a propriety in; and this I will open particularly to you.

1. God hath a general right to all the works of his hands, especially in the reasonable world. You shall find the psalmist saith, in Psalm 100. 3. "Know ye, that the Lord he is God; it is he that made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, the sheep of his pasture." He hath an undoubted right in all creatures, both men and angels, as he is their Creator. But notwithstanding this clear title of God, the greatest part of the world do not obey him: he hath indeed the right of a king, but they do not pay him the reverence due to him as a king; they do not subject themselves to him. And in this respect you must make a difference between being a king, and reigning over a people: a prince may have authority over a people, and they may prove rebellious, and he not reign over them. Now the greatest part of the world live in this way of rebellious opposition against God. It is said, Psal. 2. 2, 3, "the kings of the earth

set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, "let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." It is not creation that gives that propriety in a people, that they shall hereby have a title to God's rest: the fallen angels were his sons by creation: the angels are called the sons of God; but they have proved rebellious in his own court, and therefore expelled from thence.

2. The propriety of God in his people, is upon more peculiar and special accounts.

(1.) To begin with the rise of it; his merciful choosing of them from eternity to be vessels of grace and glory. God's original title ariseth from his electing-love; "I have chosen them to be a people to myself." Isa. 43. 20. And our Saviour speaking concerning his apostles, John 6. 17. "thine they were, and thou gavest them me." How were the apostles God the Father's in a special manner? The meaning of that expression is, they were thine by thy merciful choice, by thy peculiar electing-love; thine they were and thou gavest them me; to be the matter of my purchase; to be redeemed and saved by me. You must know, as it is with earthly kings and their people, they have their several limits, whereby one kingdom is distinguished from another; as rivers, mountains, and the like; so the kingdom and people of God are limited by his election, from the kingdoms of the world, and of satan. All those upon whom the beams of electing-love shine, those that God hath chosen from pure mercy, they are his people strictly and properly, and distinguished from all those that are entitled his people by an external profession.

(2.) This title of God to his people, as it took its rise from election, so it is confirmed by his special and peculiar redeeming of them: he paid a ransom for them out of his own treasury; that is the most precious blood of the Son of God given for them by the order and appointment of his Father: and the Lord Jesus was God's servant in the work of our redemption; and his redemption had respect to the will of his Father, as the first rise and motive of it; and those whom his Father gave him, he doth effectually redeem: he not only laid down a price for them, but all the benefits he purchased by his blood, he applieth to them. You know how the apostle challengeth the Corinthians upon

this title. 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20. "You are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits, which are God's." Mankind was fallen from the glory of God, and was brought to a state of servile bondage to sin, and was under the curse of the law. Now though this could not defeat God of his right, this sin of man could not alienate man from God; God's title was still entire, notwithstanding; yet nevertheless man was brought into such a state, that he was incapable to serve God. Then he was pleased to appoint the life of his Son to be a sacrifice to redeem mankind from the curse of the law, and to reconcile himself to them, and free them from the bondage of sin. And this is a title that cost him more dear than the creating of the whole world; for that was effected by his word; "he spake, and it was done," saith the psalmist; but it was not so in the redemption of man, that had sold himself to sin, and was under the heavy sentence of the law: he was put to the expence of that which was the richest treasure, the precious blood of the Son of God. And thus God hath a special people upon the account of election and special redemption.

(3.) The third title God hath to his people, is from renovation, the restoring of them to his own image, and the renewing of their natures, and giving to them heavenly endowments, preparing them for his service and glory. So you shall find the apostle tells them, Eph. 2. 10. "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." So that as a man hath a right to the house which he builds, and he is truly the owner of it that finds the materials, and frames and raiseth the building; so God is the owner of his people; they are his living and spiritual temple, raised and framed for his praise, they are his workmanship. As in nature God is obeyed by every rank of creatures in those actions which are congruous, and suitable to those principles of operation which he hath put into them. As when the sun runs its course, and the stars keep their regular motion, and the flux and reflux of the sea obey God, and all the creatures observe that order that he hath appointed, and act according to their several principles of operation. Thus it is with the sensitive world; and so it is likewise with the people of God, that have a new nature communicated to them, they

are furnished with heavenly qualities to serve God, and to glorify and enjoy him.

Thus I have gone over three things that evidence God's propriety in his people; and could you bring it down to yourselves, it would be of use to you. Election is an object too high for us to see immediately; we cannot look into the rolls of eternity; but election makes itself evident, and declares itself in our sanctification: for sanctification is, as it were, a temporal election; for God chooseth a person when he makes him holy, and separates him from the rest of the world: Psal. 100. 3. "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." You must understand it in a political sense: God is our governor, and we must obey him; you know flocks of sheep have marks upon them, that separate and distinguish them from other sheep; so the saints have God's mark upon them. Holiness to the Lord is a visible stamp, whereby they are distinguished from the world; whereby it is clear and evident, that he prepares them for his rest above.

ii. On our part, being of the number of the people of God, includes these things: our *unfeigned consent* to be his people. When the soul is absolutely and entirely brought to close with the right of God, and to confirm his right in us, and to acknowledge it, and to accept of it cordially and sincerely; then we come to be in the number of God's people. You find an expression which is directly to this purpose: Psal. 110. 3. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Willing to what? Willing to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and Christ, and to yield up themselves to it. In the day of thy power? That is, when the grace of God, which hath omnipotency going along with it, shall work upon the heart, and make it willing to own and acknowledge God in this. There are none but will acknowledge God in profession and words that they are his: but the greatest part of the world keep the crown upon the devil's head; they are his servants, and yield him the throne of their hearts, and he reigns in them: but those that are the people of God, they do with their hearts acknowledge his right and title to them, and do most desirously close with him. In short; as God takes them to be his people, so do they joyfully and pleasantly yield up themselves to be his servants, and take him to be their sovereign: if it be offered to their choice, they infinitely prefer him and his government above all others. This, as to our believing

sense, is the foundation of our relation to God. His election and choice is a thing without us, and above us; and it discovers itself by the effects; until we be made a willing people, we can never discover that he is our King and Lord, and will reward us with eternal life. That you may not deceive yourselves with a vain pretence of being God's people; they that are the people of God, will own him for their King, and be subject to his laws, and subject to them all, without exception. If there be any duty, God commands you as a king, and from that title, and if there be any niceness or aversion in your breasts against it, and you would fain have your obligation to that duty dissolved, you are none of God's people; for the reserving of one sin, and the exception of one duty, will make you in a state of rebellion and enmity against God. Where ever this is, it will make a person incapable of this rest: though the gospel makes an allowance for failings, and infirmities, and relapses; yet there is no chancery in the gospel for any person that retains any sin, and that hath a prevailing exception in his heart against any command: if you think there is, you build your hopes upon a fancy. The gospel requires sincerity; and the very essence of sincerity lies in this, that I endeavour entirely to comply with all God's will. I may be surprised into a sin against God; I may by a sudden temptation break a command; but if there be not a sincere endeavour to comply with all the will of God, such a person is God's enemy, and never to be received in his kingdom. The subjection must be entire and sincere; "Then shall I not be ashamed" (saith the psalmist, Psal. 119. 6.) "when I have respect to all thy commandments:" that is, his hope shall not be disappointed at last, so as to expose him to everlasting shame.

There must be a *persevering* and a *constant subjection*. Rom. 2. 7. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing," whatsoever it cost you, whatsoever difficulty or hazard you are exposed to, whatsoever you lose. If you do not persevere in well-doing, you can plead nothing from gospel-promises, to this rest. Rev. 2. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Were it possible for a man to go on in a course of holiness to the last day of his life, and he should then break off his course, if he should meet with a temptation so grateful or terrible as to make him leave off his obedience to God, he could have no comfortable hope of heaven: "For he only that endu-

reth to the end shall be saved." And here it is observable, the scripture tells us, though a man hath lived in a course of disobedience and opposition to God many years, if he turn to God at last, and persevere in that return he shall go to heaven: but if he hath lived an hundred years in obedience and at last fall off he shall perish for ever. And we find a resemblance of this in the justice of men. Suppose a person hath done never so worthily for a king and kingdom, if afterwards he turn rebel, he may justly be cut off for his rebellion. So if a person fall off from God; all his former righteousness shall be forgotten; for this rest remaineth only for those that are the persevering people of God.

CHAP. II.

Heaven the place of this rest. It is stable, and vastly large; very glorious, and pleasant.

II. I Come now to speak of the place of this rest. It is enjoyed in that kingdom that is unshaken above. You shall find an expression of the apostle very fit to my purpose: Heb. 12. 28. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken or moved." It is a proper place for this rest I am speaking of. The kingdoms of this world are not more properly compared to any thing, than the sea, which is always voluble and inconstant, and sometimes so violent, that he which expects rest there, must contradict both reason and sense. This world is a seat of change and mutability: but the kingdom above is most aptly resembled by a sea of glass, Rev. 15. 2. "I saw as if it were a sea of glass." There is no unquiet agitation in a sea of glass, no disturbance there. The kingdom of heaven is God's sanctuary, where the God of peace reigns. It is said in the book of Job,

Job 25. 2. "He makes peace in his high places." Indeed once there was a disturbance in heaven; when the angels fell; but that disturbance did not continue, they were presently expelled from their first habitation; that is the region of peace.

It is an expression of Seneca, as a piece of poetical bravery, *Animus sapientis est sicut locus supra lunam, semper illic serenum est*: the heart of a wise man is like the place above the moon, all is serene and calm there.

The lower region is charged with clouds and thunder, which encounter one another, and make disturbance: but the true rest is heaven, the celestial paradise above, the New Jerusalem, God hath fitted and prepared that place for the rest of his people. Although it is but little that we can speak of the glory of that place, I can raise your thoughts of it a little, by one consideration which I find in the prophet Isaiah, chap. 6. When the seraphims were praising God, one cried to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole world is full of his glory." That which I apply it for, is this, this lower world, that is this earth, is full of the glory of God; the earth, which God hath made the receptacle of birds and beasts. If the earth that is the wilderness of God's people, and which his enemies enjoy, is full of the glory of God, pray raise your thoughts by this consideration;

What is heaven then, and the glory of God's sanctuary above? How do all his perfections shine there.

If the "earth be full of the glory of the Lord," do not doubt but the glory of that place doth contribute to the blessedness of this rest. Look upon the aspectible heavens, all those great luminaries, sun, moon, and stars, they are but the frontispiece of heaven: now this is the rest of the people of God. We cannot now conceive what is the glory of that rest. The scripture saith something to us of the place of our future happiness; it would be a proud curiosity to make such inquiries into it as we have no foundation for in the word of God: but there are several things the Holy Spirit in the scripture reveals to us concerning it: all which will serve to enlarge our apprehensions concerning that rest and blessedness we shall enjoy in heaven. There are four which I shall briefly touch upon, and then proceed.

1. The stability of that place, the security of it. It is called, Heb. 11. 10. "A city that hath foundations." There the apos-

tle speaks concerning the patriarchs that were in an unsettled condition, travelling into a strange country. It is said concerning Abraham, the father of them, Heb. 11. 10. "He looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. He dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Tabernacles were moving tents, that had no foundations, that might easily be carried from one place to another: but heaven is a city which hath foundations. This lower world, and the upper world that is visible to us, shall either be refined or consumed by fire, notwithstanding all that exquisite order and beauty that we see in them. The apostle tells us they are reserved for fire; now whether that fire shall be consuming, or whether it shall be merely a reforming purifying fire, we are not certain: though there are some probable reasons that may induce us to a belief of it that it shall only be a reforming and refining one. For the apostle tells us, Rom. 8. 22. "We know the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now:" and in the foregoing verse it is said, "Because the creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The apostle speaks concerning this world, which you know hath been defiled and stained by the sin of man. And St. Peter saith, 2 Pet. 3. 13. "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This visible form of the heavens, which is subjected to our eye, shall be destroyed: for thus the psalmist speaks, Psal. 102. 25, 26. "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." In the elementary world all things are in a perpetual change: those things that are so much admired and loved, all those vain idols that men set their hearts upon, they are all changing and perishing every day: but now for the heavens and the earth themselves, observe what the prophet saith, "Thou shalt change them." We see no cause that would be sufficient to change this heaven and this earth; the divine power only can do it: but he that hath made them, will and can easily change them. But for the heaven of glory, where the saints shall be, that is a city that hath foundations, there shall be no change there. In the history of the creation, it is obser-

vable, Moses speaks not one word concerning the making of the supreme heavens, though they may be included in the visible heavens. He only speaks expressly of this visible world, which shall be changed. Observe what our Saviour tells us, John 14. 2. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Our habitations in this lower world are like an inn, or house of progress, that one lies at for a little time. But heaven is called a mansion, the place of the saint's residence; there shall be no change, no shadow of change there, but it shall be kept always by the power of God, as a prepared habitation for the rest of God's people. Now by the way, this shows how vain it is for us to expect rest here, in a house that is but propped up for a while. Therefore we cannot expect rest here. It is spoken of as one of the prodigies of nature, concerning the kingfisher, that she builds her nest in the sea, one of the most moveable elements; but that little bird is instructed by nature to build her nest there when there is a perfect calm, for the security of its young. But there is no calm in this world, all things are in a perpetual flux, in a rapid motion. The heavens that are over us shall be confounded and destroyed, and the stars shall fall like leaves in autumn, and the fire shall pass upon them all: but the heavenly kingdom is unshaken, a place that is fit for rest.

2. To show you further how this place is fitted for rest, as the scripture speaks concerning the stability of it, so it discovers to us its vastness and immensity. It is a place capacious enough to be the seat of an innumerable company of angels, and of all the saints of God, when they shall be united together in one glorious assembly at the last day. John 14. 2. "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Many mansions; there is room in abundance. There is such an extension, as to hold all the blessed spirits together, so as every one shall have his particular mansion, every one shall have a place of ease and rest. When Solomon had built a magnificent temple to God, saith he, 1 Kings 8. 27. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built? Will God indeed dwell on earth?" That is, will he afford his glorious presence with his people in his temple? Then it follows, "Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain

thee." It is spoken with respect to the amplitude of that kingdom. There are three heavens that the scripture speaks of; the ærial heaven, that which encompasseth all the earth and sea. So you read of the fowls of heaven, the birds that fly in the air. 2ndly, The ethereal heaven, where are the sun, moon, and stars, And 3dly, There is the heaven of heavens which is called the third heavens in scripture. Now do but observe this earth, that contains innumerable inhabitants and creatures upon it, this vast earth, compared to the starry heavens, is but as one single point; it is as nothing: and the heaven of heavens encompasseth all the starry heavens, and hath a vastness that is inconceivable to us. How great it is, we cannot tell; but we are sure of this, that it is a place built for the glory of God, and answerable to the greatness of that King. Now this still falls in with the notion of the rest: every saint shall be a king there, and have a kingdom large enough to fill all his desires. It is a fancy of some of the schoolmen, that one of the torments of hell shall be the narrowness of the place, where the damned shall be crowded together. I cannot tell whether there is any foundation for such a notion in scripture, where we read indeed of hell represented by the greatest torments to sense, as fire and brimstone, and the worm that never dies: but it says nothing of its being so strait a place. But as for heaven, that the scripture represents as a very large one. Our Saviour says, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you:" if it were not a place large enough for you, I would have been so faithful to you, as to make a discovery of it. So that the boundlessness of that kingdom tends to make it a fit habitation for our rest.

3. The scripture discovereth to us the glory of it: and that fore-mentioned place of Solomon is applicable to this purpose: it is called the heaven of heavens; it is so called by way of excellency and transcendency; and Christ calls it my Father's house: Christ's Father is the Father of glory; you know he is particularly called so in scripture; the Father of glory. So heaven is called God's throne: Isa. 66. 1. "Thus saith the Lord, heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." His throne, that signifies it is that place wherein he doth manifest himself in his glorious presence. As when a king is seated upon his throne, it is with all the ensigns of majesty and greatness. God's throne is that place where he exhibits himself in the most glorious man-

ner. So it is called God's temple: Hab. 2. 20. "But the Lord is in his holy temple." Heaven is a throne and a temple, a place prepared with all divine art for the manifestation of God's glory. You read concerning New Jerusalem, Rev. 21. 17, 18. "The building of the wall of it was of jasper, the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundation of the walls of the city was garnished with all manner of precious stones." The walls of the city are thus represented to us by precious stones, because they are most fair and lively representations of the excellency of that place: but alas! all the rare marvels of nature are nothing, compared to the glory above. All the lustre of diamonds, the fire of carbuncles, and the beauty of pearls, are nothing to the glory of heaven. We are said to be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Light is the highest comparison that the scripture can make use of, both to inform us and astonish us with the glory of heaven. When our Saviour appeared at his transfiguration, it is said, Mat. 17. 2. "His face did shine as the sun, and his garments were white as the light." This is the highest comparison in nature, the inheritance of the saints in light. So on the contrary hell is set forth by a place of darkness, invincible darkness, the blackness of darkness for ever, for there is a perpetual night. So heaven is said to be a place of light. Do but consider what heaven is, when the scripture saith, "The Lord is the light of it, and God is the glory of it." There is no need there of the light of the sun, for Christ the Sun of Righteousness sheds abroad an effusion of transcendent glory, that at the first entrance into heaven the saint is struck with admiration at the glory of the place: and it is said in one scripture, "Thy God shall be thy glory." Now is not this fitted to be a place of rest, a place of light and glory?

4. Heaven this everlasting rest is represented to us in the scripture under the notion of a place of pleasure, and so it is called a paradise. So you shall find our Saviour speaking to the thief on the cross that prayed to him, Luke 23. 43. "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom: Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The apostle Paul tells us, 2 Cor. 12. 4. "That he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, &c." Now this expression is allegorical, and allusive to that first delicious garden that God prepared to be a seat for innocent

man. The garden of Eden was a place that had in it all things that were for the support, and comfort, and pleasure of this life; and paradise is a word that signifies a garden of pleasure. Now heaven is represented to us by paradise, a place that was made for delight and joy; and it hath this glorious privilege above this earthly paradise, that the earthly paradise was not exempted from the poison of the serpent, that infected man in his head and original, the woful effect of which we feel to this day: but the paradise above is inaccessible to all evil, a place framed for delight, no thorns or briars there, nothing that can afflict or cause sorrow; no, it is the paradise of God, a paradise in the midst whereof the Son of God is the tree of life, upon which the saints feed and live for ever. And this is another thing the scripture speaks of concerning the glory of that place where we shall have our rest.

CHAP. III.

Of the excellency of this rest. This is a point which carnal men cannot relish: it is a holy rest, both as it imports a ceasing from the dominion and being of sin and temptation: and performance of all those holy duties which are proper to this state: for which the soul is exalted to the highest pitch of natural perfection, and has supernatural endowments, whence result the most exalted operations.

III. I Shall, in the next place, consider the excellencies of this rest: and here I shall premise this, that I am about to treat of a subject that I fear most that are here cannot taste or relish. As for a discourse of heaven, a carnal man is no more affected with it, than if you should bring a swine into a curious palace, adorned with all things of art and industry; to see pictures drawn with exquisite skill in paint, or statues carved in the most excellent and lively manner; could a swine take any delight in

these things? So without a pure heart, and holy and heavenly affections, we cannot taste any thing of heaven, or of this rest prepared for the people of God. If you speak of heaven to a carnal man, it is just as if a master of philosophy, or the mathematics, should come and read to an illiterate ignorant man the sublime notions, and profound mysteries of these noble sciences: no more can a carnal man relish the things of heaven. If an angel should come and speak to him, he would say, give me this world, and the things here below, and keep heaven above. I shall now proceed to speak of the excellencies of this rest.

i. First, This rest that remains to the people of God is a *holy rest;* it is called a sabbath rest.

Now in the opening of this, there are two things considerable.

1. It is a holy rest, in ceasing from sin, as the scripture speaks.

2. It is a holy rest, as it consists in the exercise of all those holy and heavenly parts of worship which is proper to heaven; and such is the rest of a sabbath.

1. For the first of these; as it imports a ceasing from sin. There is a threefold freedom and rest from sin. (1.) There is a freedom from the dominion of sin, and this is that privilege which the saints have in their measure in this life.

We read our Saviour tells the Jews, John 8. 34, 35. "whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin; and the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth for ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." That is the truest and noblest freedom, to be freed from the servitude of sin, that bondage, that enslaves our more excellent part, our immortal part, the soul; that is most royal and excellent liberty; and this is obtained by the Son of God; that is, if you look upon the state of sin, wherein we are involved by nature, look upon it as a part of the curse fallen upon mankind, upon account of his apostacy from God; and so our Saviour hath purchased this privilege for a believer, that he should be rescued from this bondage of sin, for sin hath these two great evils that go along with it; it is not only a provocation to God, exposing a man to the wrath of God, and making him obnoxious to the divine displeasure; but sin does also defile and debase the human nature, and so hath in it the greatest curse that the reasonable creature is capable of; it makes a man

unlike to God, and viler than the earth he treads upon; and like the brute beasts, it degrades him to the lowest servility. There is nothing in the world like sin, it provokes God to give a man over to his own heart's lusts, and to forsake him for ever, and to pronounce a curse upon him, "he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." Rev. 22. 11. And those that fall under this curse, are under the greatest servility. The wicked are all his slaves. Take that man that is of the civilest conversation in the world, till he be sanctified and renewed by Christ, he is a slave, and under the command of some lust, though it be not visible to you, and it hath a throne in his heart, and reigns there. "But now," saith the apostle, Rom. 6. 22. "being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Observe, here he speaks concerning the present sanctified state of the people of God, that are freed from sin, from its power and reign: whoever is not thus free, he hath no interest in Christ, nor ever felt the blessed effects of his death. This is one step and degree to that rest the apostle speaks of in the text.

(2.) There is a freedom from the relics or the being of sin, a freedom that imports an absolute and complete purifying and cleansing from all kinds and degrees of sin whatsoever; and this is that which is meant here. The apostle speaks of this to the Ephesians, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5. 2, 6, 27. This design of Christ's death is carrying on while the saints are in this world; it is carrying on by the providences of God, whether prosperous or afflictive, and also by the ordinances of God, and the Spirit of God, who makes both ordinances and providences effectual upon the soul. But this entire freedom from sin is only attained when we come to heaven. And you may observe here the great wisdom of God, that as sin brought in death, so now with respect to the people of God, death is that which abolisheth sin, that puts an end to all sin; he hath made that which is in itself a penalty of sin, to be instrumental for the entire clearing and purifying the soul from

sin. For when this mortal flesh is laid down in the grave, the soul shall be cleansed from all remaining pollutions, there shall not be so much as a spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. In the 12th of Hebrews, where we have the state of the gospel church represented both as militant and triumphant: "you are come," says the apostle, "to Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel." The spirits of just men made perfect, doth signify an absolute and entire freedom from all sin, which is the greatest imperfection and debasing of the soul.

(3.) There is another freedom from sin, which is in heaven; and that is a freedom from all molesting temptations, from all things that might disturb their peace, that might endanger their fall. You shall find the two Adams, both the first and second, although they were perfectly innocent, yet they were both liable to temptations; and the first Adam fell by a temptation, and lost more grace in one moment, than we can ever recover in this world in all ages. You all know how cheaply and easily he parted with his happiness, by the subtle temptation of satan. The second Adam was tempted too by the wicked one; but saith Christ, "the prince of this world cometh, and findeth nothing in me." There was no corruption in Christ to work upon. The temptations of satan surrounded him in the wilderness, but could not surprise him, they could not fasten any thing upon him; but yet our Lord Jesus was liable to temptation. But in heaven, O blessed rest, where the arrows of the tempter can never reach. There is not only a freedom from sin, and all possibility of that sinning, but there is a freedom from any thing that might disturb that blessed rest, as it often falls out in the world; but by the grace of God, when the saints are tempted, they reject the temptation, and overcome the tempter. We read of that holy and chaste creature Joseph, when a grateful temptation offered itself, he refused it with abhorrence, "how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" So the heavenly grace God communicates to his people, makes them victorious over both

pleasant and terrible temptations; "we are more than conquerors" (saith the apostle) "through Christ that hath loved us." And there is a most divine joy which ariseth in the soul when we have this testimony of our sincerity, that we resist temptations. But now in heaven there shall be nothing of this. Here the people of God keep their innocence, and preserve their purity, yet they are disturbed by temptations. "I besought the Lord thrice," saith the apostle when he was buffeted by satan, "there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan buffetted me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me: and he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee." 1 Cor. 22. 7. But in heaven there shall be no buffeting of satan, no molesting us by temptation. O blessed rest! when the soul shall be freed from sin, sin which is the greatest evil in its own nature, the highest provocation to the holy God, and the most burthensome thing in the world to a holy soul which is a continual body of death. O blessed rest! when the soul shall be freed from sin, and all the degrees of it! when the soul shall be raised above all temptations; when it shall be in the light of God's countenance for ever, where nothing shall disturb our most joyful exercise in the serving and praising of God. Do but consider what a happy state this is; and indeed till you are so far freed from sin as to be out of love with it, and to hate it, with an irreconcileable hatred, you cannot be partakers of this privilege, and heaven itself would be no heaven to you. If you do not look upon sin as the greatest evil, and upon holiness as the most glorious good, and most desirable excellency, you cannot be capable of this blessed rest.

2. It is a holy rest, as it includes in it not a bare cessation from sin, but also an exercise of all those holy and heavenly duties which are proper to this state of rest. The word that is used here, in the original, signifies the rest of a sabbath: now the rest of a sabbath, had two things considerable in it.

(1.) The rest of a sabbath was commemorative of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage; and in this respect that command is no more, as to us: the Jewish rest was a duty enjoined with respect to their state of servitude, wherein they had been harassed so long in Egypt, and the rest of that day was in itself a duty upon that account: indeed the rest that we have

now upon the Lord's day, may be typical of our rest in heaven, but it hath no retrospect on the servility which the Jews suffered.

(2.) The rest of the sabbath was relative, in order to the performance of all solemn services which God required on that day. For if you consider rest in itself, that is, bodily rest, it is a thing not pleasing and grateful to God in itself; but it hath respect to some more noble end; that is without interruption they might attend upon the service of God in the tabernacle, or temple, or other places of worship, where God was called upon. And so this heavenly rest includes in it the performance of all those acts of duty, and homage, and thankfulness which are the immortal work and business of the saints above.

Now for the opening of this to you, the following things are to be noticed.

In order to this perfect service of God in heaven, the spirits of the saints are exalted in their natural faculties to the highest degree of natural perfection, that so they may be prepared for this service. Their understandings are most clear, and composed: there is the exaltation of the soul in all its power and faculties, to the highest degree of natural perfection. This is included in the expression of the apostle, where he speaks of the heavenly state, Heb. 12. 23. "ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect."

All these powers and faculties have supernatural endowments, which are the highest perfection (I spoke of their natural perfections before) all heavenly graces are infused into the soul, and that in the highest degree; so that as your jewels of great price are set in the finest gold, so then the graces of God's spirit are most fully given to the human soul, when it is raised to its highest perfection. Thus in the understanding, there is a perfect knowledge of God. Light is that which is spoken of as the character of heaven; it is called, "the inheritance of the saints in light;" and so saith the psalmist, "in thy light we shall see light." In the will and affections there is a most entire and ardent love of God, which is its highest perfection. In the whole soul there is that joy and that peace that may make all the faculties united to glorify God.

(3.) From the soul raised to the highest degree of its natural perfection; and from those supernatural perfections that are

bestowed upon it, there result the noblest, and purest, and most exalted operations of the soul; and herein they consist: in the contemplation of God, and his glorious excellencies, and wonderful works, and in the continual love and praises of God, the admiring of him, and the esteeming of his excellencies and works, and in the continual enjoying of him. Thus the heavenly state is often set forth by the seeing of God; Matt. 5. 8. "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:" Heb. 12. "and without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And it is set forth by the praising of God; Isa. 6. 3. "and the seraphims cried one to another, and said, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." And so you shall find, Rev. 5. 13. "every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever, and ever." This is the work of heaven: and indeed we cannot entertain any proper conception of heaven otherwise: for observe, the glorifying the creature is not for itself, but in order to the glory of God. God doth not take the soul and transport it to heaven, that the soul should be merely happy in the enjoyment of God, but that God might be glorified in glorifying the creature. So that you cannot otherwise conceive of this rest, this divine and heavenly rest. Now here God acts like a wise and holy God, all his actions terminate in his own glory. This one consideration of heaven, that it is a holy rest, is that which makes it unamiable, and undesirable to carnal men. It is true, such may desire it as a refuge from hell: but they desire it not as a state wherein they are to be always conversant in the love of God, and in the praises of God, and the everlasting enjoyment of him. Carnal men cannot taste it, they have not a proper palate for it: it can only draw forth the heart of the saints: and yet, let me tell you, this is the substantial blessedness of heaven.

There is a question among philosophers, whether happiness consists in our action, or merely in our enjoyment? And we must determine it doth consist in both. It is not our mere passive reception of the glory of God that is our happiness, without our active returns to him, our glorifying him, the Author and Fountain of all.

CHAP. IV.

It is a joyful rest. This set forth by the joy of holy men in this life, in pardon, grace, and hope of heaven. The grounds of this joyful rest; viz. freedom from all toil in the service of God, from afflictions of all sorts. Compared to the joy of harvest; and of a victory. Which must be great, because of the dangerous enemies that are overcome, and the prize that hereby is secured; and it is an entire, absolute, final victory.

ii. THE second excellency of our rest in heaven, is this, it is not only a holy rest, but it is a *joyful rest*. And for the opening of this, there are many things which I shall propound to you.

1. Consider the kingdom of heaven hath several degrees. There is a lower degree of it that is possessed here. You shall find in one scripture our Saviour tells his hearers, that "the kingdom of God is within them." And if you compare that scripture with what the apostle saith, Rom. 14. 17. "the kingdom of God is not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." You will find that in this life we have the first degrees of the heavenly kingdom. We have the first degrees of it as to the righteousness and holiness of it, and as to the peace and joy of it while we are here. And therefore we read of the firstfruits of the Spirit, and of the earnest of the Spirit: that is, the operations of the Holy Ghost, whether the graces or comforts of the saints here, are the firstfruits and earnests of the heavenly state. Now this I lay as a foundation, that so I may raise your thoughts to consider what the joy of the heavenly life is. Consider, in this life there are three things that are matter of spiritual joy to the saints, which afford so rich, so replenishing and satisfying a joy to them, that all the pleasures of the world are dilute and tasteless to them, and they bear with magnanimity all the troubles of this world. Let us a little consider them, that so we may thereby exalt and raise our thoughts to conceive of the glory of heaven. There are three things that are matter of our joy here.

(1.) Reconciliation with God in Christ, the pardon of sin.

This the apostle particularly instanceth in; Rom. 5. 1. "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The peace and joy that arises from hence, the apostle tells, Phil. 4. 7. "passeth all understanding," not only with respect to the causes of it, it being purchased by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God; but the sense of it while we are here, exceeds all possible expression; our understandings cannot find out words large enough to declare the joyful sense we have of it. For the soul that hath felt what an intolerable burthen sin is, to have the pardoning mercy of God upon solid grounds declared to it, it brings down heaven into the soul, it is a very paradise here. O my brethren, he that enjoys the pardoning mercy of God by the light of faith, hath a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

(2.) Another thing that is matter of our spiritual joy is, when the work of grace is carried on prosperously in the soul. When religion in its radiancy and vigour governs in our hearts. There is nothing more joyful to a holy person than this; and accordingly as sin is subdued, and temptations effectually resisted, and grace doth obtain more degrees of power within us, proportionably according to the righteousness and holiness of this kingdom, is always the joy and peace of it, unless it be in particular temptations. I speak of the usual course with God's people; this makes the soul willing to suffer the loss of outward things, if its inward graces thrive and flourish.

(3.) As the favour of God, and the image of God, are the causes of this joy, so the hope of eternal glory. This the scripture often mentioneth: Rom. 5. 2. "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." And it is said in another place, "rejoicing in hope;" and Rom. 15. 10. "rejoice ye Gentiles with his people. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." We have not only joy of present reconciliation, but of believing that we shall come to the consummating joy above. I lay this down for raising your thoughts by this consideration: if that joy that is in the breast of a saint is so great, that the strength, and virtue, and efficacy of it will make him despise all that the carnal world so much esteemeth, and endure all that the carnal world so much fears; then ascend in your thoughts, and consider what is the joy of heaven; if the

earnest and firstfruits of it will make a christian rejoice, and "glory in tribulation!" Rom. 5. 3. I remember it is the observation of Tertullian in the primitive times, that when the christian church was under the most terrible persecution, the very heathen were induced to consider what the religion was, that fortified men to endure the greatest miseries with that serenity of soul, with that joy, with that triumph. He observes that several heathens were induced to consider the excellency of religion, and to say, certainly this religion is divine, it is the offspring of heaven, that can make poor creatures endure such troubles with joy. Now (my brethren) there is as much difference between what the saints attain and enjoy in this world, and the joys of heaven, as there is between sipping at a cistern, and entering into the ocean of joy. Here the joy of heaven enters into the saints, but hereafter they shall enter into that joy. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25. 31. Heaven is the element of joy, the immense ocean of joy, where the souls of the people of God are always filled to the utmost capacities. O consider how joyful that state must be, which so infinitely transcends and exceeds the joy that the saints have here! And yet the apostle Paul, who was a man of sorrows, 1 Cor. 6. 5. "in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;" saith he, "we are as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." He speaks of his troubles with a diminution, as sorrowful; as if they only touched his skin, and did not pierce his flesh; but he had his heart full of joy. But now this fulness of joy, the perfection of it is above. Consider this joy of heaven, this heavenly rest;

2. There is in it a freedom from all toil which we endure in the service of God. While we are here below, our bodies are the instruments of our souls; and though "the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak:" therefore it is requisite there should be an intermission of the most serious, intent, and most immediate service of God, because our sensitive faculties would otherwise be wasted, and sink under the burthen. He that plays upon a lute is fain to relax the strings, lest by a constant stretching of them the strings should break. But we shall cease in heaven from all that labour that is wearisome to our sensitive parts: for although the bodies of the saints shall for ever be joined with their souls in the service of God, yet their bodies there shall be

spiritual bodies; "it is sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body." 2. Cor. 15. 44. Spiritual, not with respect to the substance of the body, for it is impossible that flesh should be converted into spirit; but it is a spiritual body, as it is fitted for those spiritual exercises in heaven, and as it hath spiritual endowments that qualify it for that state. So that in heaven there shall be no weariness and no occasion of relaxing us from the service of God, for the refreshing and recruiting our strength. But on earth no saint can continue with constancy and invariableness in the discharge of his duty, but he will waste his strength and spirits, and want refreshment. Indeed our Saviour did do the will of his heavenly Father without intermission; but every saint while he is living in the flesh, needs some relaxation, in order to a more vigorous service of God: but in heaven, in that eternal rest, we shall be freed from all that is toilsome and wearying in the serving and glorifying God.

3. There shall be a rest from all those afflicting evils which we are liable to upon a double account. Either, 1st. Those afflictions that are attendant upon our mortal state: those afflictions which though they are not the immediate punishments of sin, yet are the consequences of sin. It is said, that "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward:" you know sparks do naturally ascend; so man in this mortal state is naturally liable to trouble, and many times the most excellent servants of God are under painful and languishing diseases, so that they can neither live nor die; how many times are they exposed to those calamities which swiftly range through the world, which strike first upon one, and then upon another? Though yet they are overruled by a superior providence. In heaven they shall be freed from all that is afflicting, that will any way discompose or distress their rest. 2dly, Besides these common calamities, there are special afflictions that the people of God are obnoxious to; while there is any in this world that hate the image of God, and oppose the glory of God, his people are liable in a special and peculiar manner to their rage and fury: for there was no age as yet, but there have been enemies to the saints as saints: as the apostle saith, "he that loveth him that begat, will love him also that is begotten of him." So on the contrary, one who hates him that begat, will hate him also that is begotten of him. We read, John 12. they had a design to murder Lazarus, because

Christ raised him from the dead; because his divine power and authority was visible in his resurrection: so many hate the saints because God hath quickened them to a divine life, that were dead in sins and trespasses. Do you not see in France at this very time the spirit of persecution and rage raised against the professors of the truth, which except God in mercy extinguish, will end in their ruin? And it is your duty to lay it to heart, and sympathize with them. But in heaven the saints shall be freed from all this: they are not only freed from all calamities, but from all persecutions they are exposed to for the name of Christ. In the next place.

4. They are freed from all sorrowful affections: you shall find the scripture hath expressions more than once about this. It is said, Rev. 21. 4. That "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no suffering, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." In heaven there is no shadow of sin, no shadow of sorrow, no shadow of death: it is the kingdom of life and joy; all tears are dried up there. Now there are three kinds of tears that flow from our eyes while we are in this world, which shall all be dried up in heaven.

(1.) Our tears of contrition for our offending God, and for fear of the divine displeasure. O there is no grief more cordial than this! A holy soul that loveth God, is never more deeply serious than when he exercises this affection; because God is displeased and dishonoured, this is that which pricks their hearts; as we read, Acts 2. 27. "The Jews were pricked to their hearts," when they heard that they had crucified the Lord of life. Indeed a hardened stupid wretch, in whom rebellion reigns, he looks upon his sins as a light burden: but a gracious soul is troubled for a vain thought, for an idle word, or an irregular action: the reason is, because a saint hath proper conceptions of the holiness of God, the highest valuations of his favour; therefore whatsoever is a contradiction to his holy will, whatsoever eclipseth the light of his countenance, he doth most deeply and sensibly lay to heart. In heaven it is matter of their joy, that God hath given them complete victory over all their past sins. Repentance should accompany the soul to the gates of heaven, but it shall never enter there. As we read in the book of Esther, concerning the court of the Persian emperor, it is said that none

should come in mourning into his court; so none are to come to heaven in mourning: when once they are admitted into that state, immediately sorrow and sighing fly away. And is not this a joyful rest, when we shall be freed from all sorrow, the most sharp, and wounding, and deepest sorrow. In heaven there is no remembrance of God's displeasure against sin, and therefore no relics of sorrow for it: but the reconciled face and favour of God, is that which fills them with joy. When the prodigal was returned to his father, Luke 15. (that is an instance of a converted person in this life) and confessed his sin penitently and mournfully, the father calls for the robe and ring, kept a festival, and received him into his embraces. O conceive what infinite joy there is in being received into the kingdom of our heavenly Father.

(2.) As in heaven we shall be freed from all tears of contrition, so from all tears of compassion for the sins and miseries of others. They shall be all wiped away in heaven. Good men have the tenderest affections, and are most apt to sympathize with others in their temporal or spiritual troubles. If a saint could live here without sin, or any external trouble as to his own person, yet while he lives among the miserable, and is encompassed with so many spectacles of woe, so many sad sights, he can never be free from sorrow. Our Lord Jesus, when he drew near to Jerusalem, and foresaw the dreadful desolations that were hastening to it, he wept over it. Every saint hath the same mind and affections that Christ hath, and hath melting and tender affections, and a compassionate and sympathizing spirit, with reference to the evils and sufferings of others. Now in heaven all these tears of compassion shall be wiped away. What sense or knowledge the spirits in heaven have of human affairs in this world, is uncertain to us: "It is said Abraham is ignorant of us:" he knows not our afflicted state here, that is, particularly; but the saints above generally know that the saints here are in troubles and conflicts, that the church here is militant. But they that are seated before the throne of God, are incapable of sorrow, and hurtful impressions of it, from all the evils that befal others, as Christ himself is. For they live his life, and they are continually satisfied with his presence: so that it is impossible they should be touched with any sorrowful sense of the evils that befal others. Now is not this a joyful rest, when we shall not

only be freed from the sorrow of our own sins, but also from all that sorrow that the spectacles of human misery might draw from us?

(3.) There are those human tears and sorrows that arise from our own personal troubles, that are not for sin, but for the punishment of sin, the troubles that are afflictive to sense. While a man hath a soul here joined to living flesh, the soul will sympathize with all the troubles and afflictions of the body: but in heaven God hath prepared a sanctuary of rest from whatsoever may disturb or afflict us. It is said concerning the church on earth, there shall be no pricking briar, no wounding thorn: but this is eminently true of the church in heaven. So that if you consider the heavenly rest, with respect to the freedom that shall be from all toilsome labour, and all those sorrows that arise from afflictive evils, it may give you some apprehension what the joy of heaven is.

Now this freedom from evil is that which most sensibly discovereth to us the heavenly joy, while we are in this state, and upon this account, because human nature in this life is surrounded with evils, and is more sensibly affected with evil, than it is with that which is good. The life of man, which is a passage through this world, is fitly compared to a voyage through a tempestuous sea; and you may as well reckon the number of waves that impetuously break one upon another, as you can reckon up all the afflictive evils of this life. There is not the life of any single person, but there are so many scenes (if I may so speak) and so many habits and changes in this life, from mourning to joy, and from pleasure to grief and sorrow, that it cannot but be a sensible demonstration how desirable it is to be freed from these things. The truth is, we have here real griefs, but our joys are empty. Nay, there is nothing that is a temporal comfort, but it hath a hidden sting in it, and may be an occasion of grief and discomfort. So that our present life in this is like a labyrinth of thorns, we walk from one place to another, but still we meet with thorns: but in the heavenly state above, we are free from all these: sorrow and sighing are fled away: the first step we take into the heavenly kingdom, we bid an eternal farewel to grief and sorrow. Doth not this render this heavenly life very desirable, when we shall have nothing at all of impressions of things that are evil; when all the affections shall be in a joyful exercise for

ever? This I would have you frequently to consider of, as one affecting notion of heaven. The scripture insists upon it to make it desirable to you. Now before I proceed to speak concerning those things which will be our substantial joys in heaven (for now I am speaking of freedom from misery and trouble) there are two considerations whereby the scriptures represent the joyfulness of this rest, with respect to our labours, sorrows, and conflicts in this life.

Heaven is such a rest from all our sorrows and sufferings, and from all our laborious actions in this life, as we take in the harvest, after all the toil and trouble we have been at in tilling the earth, and preparing it for the harvest. It is compared in scripture to that joy that we receive from taking of the fruit of our labours. The psalmist, when he speaks concerning the afflictions of God's people, hath this very allusion, Psal. 126. 5. "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Where you see the afflicted state of godliness in this life is compared to sowing in tears; and the rest and recompence after it, is expressed by bringing their sheaves with joy. Now observe, there is no carnal joy that ariseth from our labours, that is more sensible than this, when we partake of the harvest or of the vintage. It is said there, where the psalmist speaks of carnal joy in its elevation: Psal. 4. 7. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." When our labours that are used towards the earth in ploughing and sowing, harrowing, manuring and watering it, in order to fruitfulness, succeed in a plentiful harvest, this is a time of joy. Now our rest in heaven is a partaking of the harvest and vintage of our labours; and in this respect it is a great joy. If you will believe a voice from heaven it is so: Rev. 14. 13. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Their works do follow them; that is, they do enjoy a fruitful harvest of all their works here. They rest from their labours, and have a blessed result from them in heaven. The holy soul enjoys the benefit of all its prayers, of all its tears, of all its sincere services to God, of all its love and charity to men, and of all its earnest endeavours for heaven. The memory

then hath a clear and perfect view of all the services that were done God on earth. Now the testimony of conscience in this life is so joyful, that the apostle saith, 2 Cor. 1. 12. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." When the soul comes to heaven, this testimony of conscience shall be revived and renewed in perfection; so that conscience that was here our comfort, shall be there our eternal crown, and we shall enjoy the fruit of all our own unfeigned endeavours to please and glorify God. Every talent that we have improved for him, shall be infinitely returned to us. And on this account the heavenly rest hath respect to the actions and sufferings of the saints in this life, as the fruit of their labours; so it is a joyful rest.

5. This rest is a joyful rest, as it is represented to us as a rest that is the fruit of *victory over all our enemies* that we contended with in our way to heaven. When we come to that blessed state, we are then victorious over them, and so that rest is infinitely joyful. Now the scripture makes use of this resemblance. We find Rom. 8. 37. it is said concerning the saints in this life, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Mat. 12. 26. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Judgment, by that is meant grace in the soul; it is called judgment, because the work of grace is carried on in a rational convincing manner. The judgment leads the will, and the will commands all the inferior faculties: and "Judgment shall be brought forth unto victory:" grace shall at last be powerful and victorious over all its enemies. Now there is no joy in the world that is equal to the joy of victory and triumph. And that you may see a little what the joy of heaven will be in this respect, do but consider these things, which make that victory infinitely more sweet and joyful to the soul.

(1.) The danger we are in from the enemies with whom we do contest in our way to heaven. The scripture represents them as formidable because of their enmity, subtilty, strength and great numbers; which shows how infinite our danger is. They are called by the title of their chief and regent,

the dragon and the roaring lion who hath innumerable squadrons under him, legions of rebellious spirits that are always warring against us. They are for their craft set forth under the title of the old serpent: for their strength they are called principalities and powers; and spiritual wickednesses in opposition to flesh, which is an expression of our frailty and weakness: and they are in combination with innumerable lusts in our own hearts, and with this world, and they use the allurements and discouragements of it to overcome us, and make us lose our heavenly prize. Now do but consider what we are to oppose so terrible, and such numberless enemies. The scripture speaking concerning the state of man, in opposition to satan, calleth us babes—"Out of the mouths of babes, and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." Psal. 8. 2. This does first respect our blessed Saviour, who sprang from so mean an original, as being a babe and a suckling; and under that name all his members, the whole church of God in all ages are comprehended; they are but in a state of human weakness and infirmity, so that we are in unspeakable danger of being overcome by these enemies. Where the enemy is potent and cruel, and the strength that overcomes it so small, how doth it enhance the sweetness of victory! I will give you one instance of it. The children of Israel were pursued by Pharaoh and all his chariots of Egypt; there was no passage visible for them; there was the red sea before them, and a cruel enemy behind them. Now when God made a passage for them through the red sea, and when he destroyed all their enemies in their passage, do but read what was the joyful effect of that victory: "Then sung Moses and the children of Israel, this song unto the Lord, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation, &c. who is like unto thee O Lord among the gods, who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. 15. 1—11. The memory of the eminent danger that threatened them, made them break forth into the high praises of God, and filled them with the most cordial and sensible joy, to see that they should be saved from the enemy that was ready to devour them in such a manner. So in 114 Psal. —"When Israel went out of Egypt the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, the sea saw it and fled, Jordan was

driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan that thou wast driven back?" These figurative expressions triumphantly set forth the praises of God for delivering them from their present danger, when they had the sea before them, and the Egyptian army behind them. When we come to heaven, and shall consider how dangerous an enemy we had to encounter with, how tedious conflicts he had with us, and how it might be said of us as David said of himself, "There was but a step between me and death." And God saved us from an enemy without us, and spiritual enemies within us; then we shall sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. So we read of the church when it had rest from antichristian enemies; "And they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty" &c. Rev. 15. 3. When we shall overcome this spiritual Pharaoh, the devil and all his hosts, O this will fill us with strange surprising joy, and will make us magnify the saving mercy of God, and admire his wonderful power, which saveth us from such enemies. That is one of the considerations that shows how the rest of heaven will be the joy of victory, in overcoming dangerous and cruel enemies.

(2.) The second thing is, this joyful rest is also enhanced, if you consider what that prize is which you have secured and preserved from these enemies by this victory. Suppose there was a contention about things of no great value, yet victory is pleasant about trifles; but much more a cause of joy when it is about things of greatest moment. When angry and proud kings contend about a province or a kingdom, it is no great matter, for the whole world is but a miserable scene of vanity; and if one man had it all, he would be always unsatisfied. But now consider you are to encounter with spiritual enemies for your all. The scripture tells us they war against the soul. 1 Pet. 2. 11. The soul is our most excellent and eternal part; they war against your souls and would rob you of your innocence, of your purity and peace; the prize here is invaluable: these enemies would rob you of the love of God, which is better than life, for this is that which they contend for. The apostle speaks concerning our spiritual enemies. Rom. 8. 35. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And that is the prize they would fain rob us of, the love of Christ, which is the fountain of all felicity;

and the love of God, which is better than life. These enemies would rob us of his favour, and expose us to his displeasure. Therefore the prize is so great, our victory over our enemies must be very sweet. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, an immortal inheritance, that fadeth not away, the kingdom of heaven. The apostle calls it the "prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now where there is such a perfection of blessedness, and where it is the soul that is contended for, how sweet will the victory be, when all our enemies shall be overthrown, and we secured from their assaults.

(3.) Another thing that makes this victory joyful, is this, it shall be entire, absolute, and final, over all these enemies. As Moses said to the Israelites, "Stand still and see the salvation of God, which he will show unto you to-day; for the Egyptians whom you have seen to-day, you shall see them again no more for ever." Then after their deliverance, they brake out into a triumphant song. While we are in this world, we are always in a state of warfare. Now consider what pleasure there is in victory; a holy soul finds more joy in conquering one passion, than in gratifying all his passions. There is more pleasure in mortifying one carnal affection, than in satisfying all our carnal affections. This victory will end in everlasting songs of triumph. In this world the enemy will return upon us after we have conquered him: if you resist him one hour and foil him, he will assault you the next. It is said, the tempter departed from Christ for a season. Luke 4. 13. But he was so bold and insolent as to return again upon him. So it is with every believer in this world: our victory is but single, and the enemy is not quite broken; therefore we should be always upon our guard and have our graces in a vigorous exercise, and our armour in readiness. But in heaven the enemies are totally routed and subdued, and our conflicts and dangers are at an end, for we shall be molested no more. O how joyful shall this be to us! We are not able to conceive what greater joy we can receive, than in getting a final and entire victory over all our spiritual enemies. There is one scripture very applicable to this purpose, Rev. 3. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant, to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." It is by persevering in the way of holiness, notwithstanding all the

disturbance and opposition that we meet with, that we overcome. What now doth sitting on the throne signify? It signifies two things, rest and triumph. To sit down on the throne after victory it signifies rest and freedom from all the assaults of our enemies and that triumphant joy, that glory the soul shall then be in: for heaven is a state of glorious joy, that ariseth from the ruin of our spiritual enemies. God hath made a poor weak believer to be victorious over all the opposition that earth and hell could make against him. Therefore saith the apostle, "We are more than conquerors." All the conflicts and oppositions that we meet with shall contribute to our rest and triumph. O consider these things and seriously believe and meditate on them, that so the soul may be enlarged and strengthened with constancy and vigour to go through our spiritual warfare, till we come to that joyful rest in heaven. There is nothing will make us more zealous for God and cheerful in resisting temptations, than the consideration of this everlasting rest. There is a triumphant felicity shall be bestowed upon all those that persevere in holiness to the end of their lives. Thus I have done with the consideration of this joyful rest, with respect to the cessation and freedom it gives us from all our labours, and from all the afflictive evils, and a full and complete victory over all our spiritual enemies.

CHAP. V.

There is a conjunction of all the saints in this rest. Whose society is highly pleasant, because they are free from all blemishes, and united in the most joyful work; and exceedingly love each other.

I Shall now proceed to the positive part of substantial happiness. And the first I shall instance in, is the lowest part of heaven, yet it is that which will make it very sweet to our appre-

hensions, viz. The conjunction of all the saints of God in that blessed rest, and their communion in that heavenly glory. The communion of saints is one part of their happiness in this life; and it is a part of our happiness in the next: you shall find therefore the apostle, when he speaks of the gospel-state, which comprehends both the militant and triumphant church, Heb. 12. 22. says, "But you are come to Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." We have not a more proper conception of happiness, than for persons to converse with those whom they love. Do but consider in this present life, how sweet and pleasant is the conversation of a wise and holy person, and one in whom there is sweetness of affability: how charming is the conversation of such a person; how strangely doth it ravish our hearts! So that when a man meets with such a one, he is like an angel sent from paradise to him. Now do but imagine with yourselves what joy must be, when you shall meet with the universal assembly of all the glorified spirits: when the blessed angels of God, of all orders, shall be every one your friend: when you shall see all the members of the Old and New Jerusalem, the church under the Old Testament and under the New, and shall have the most sweet and intimate converse with them. There are two things considerable, to show you how much your joyful converse in heaven will be above what you can have with the saints here, in the present state: the holiest person on earth hath his blemishes and imperfections, so that we cannot have such a clear converse with him, but it may be, sometime or other, something will be a little irksome, and this may take off from their amiableness. And we can choose none to be a friend among men, but we must make an allowance for human frailties and infirmities. But now in heaven, the image of God hath received his last hand; all the celestial colours are added to it, to give it beauty, life, and vivacity: their grace is changed into glory, and every saint is a complete copy of the original perfection of God himself: so the saints in heaven are all exceedingly lovely, and God loveth them. Therefore there is reason we should believe that the spirits of just men made perfect, will add to the loveliness and universal joy of that place; for heaven is a world of love, the law of love reigns there: faith and hope shall cease,

but love shall reign in heaven: there the saints love God perfectly, and love one another with an invariable affection. There they have one heart, and one mind; and therefore how are they pleased with the happiness of one another, in the happiness every one enjoys? And they are all sharers in the happiness of every one. How doth this make that communion and converse to be more sweet!

And consider, they are all united in that most joyful work of worshipping, of glorifying, and praising God; and they are always inflaming one anothers affections to God. We read that the seraphims cried one to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isa. 6. 3. They cried one to another, as if they would inflame each others breast; and that which is our work here is our happiness there: they are always joyfully united in the praises of the Lord, who is the King of saints: they are always singing glory to God that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. Now where there is such loveliness in every one, where there is such an entire affection, and where they are all united in so blessed a work; O what a state of joy is there! This is the state of heaven.

Do but consider what the scripture speaks of this state, and it is impossible that any one that believes and hopes for this blessedness, but he should immediately despise the earth, and all those temptations that would hinder him from obtaining. It is incredible that any one should hope for this, and not immediately renounce these vain and sensual perishing pleasures. O let us be purifying ourselves, and refining ourselves, that we may be made meet for heaven: this should be the end of your hearing, and it is the end of my preaching to you.

In short, heaven is that kingdom and that state where love is the law, and where it rules. So you shall find the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 13. 8. "Charity never fails; whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away, &c." Faith and hope shall give way to vision and enjoyment, which is in its perfection above. We read of the love of Jonathan to David, a rare and almost unparalleled instance, considering the great distance between them; the one being a prince and an heir to a crown, and the other but of mean extraction. 1 Sam. 18. 1. In heaven

the law of love is obeyed in its perfection: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; it is not obeyed so here; but in heaven there is a complete obedience; they have a love so complete and absolute to one another, that they unspeakably love the happiness of one another. If you should say to me now, but the scripture tells us, there are degrees of glory in heaven, and doth not that cause some suspicion and jealousy between them? Is there nothing of discord there? Where some excel others in glory as the stars of the greatest magnitude excel those that are lesser in glory. I answer all the saints in heaven are complete according to their capacities: indeed some are more enlightened and more enlarged in their enjoyment of God; but they are all complete, they are all kings, and they all reign with God, they are all heirs of God; what can be said more of them? Consider further with yourselves; the wills of all the blessed are in perfect conformity and submission to God's will. Now it is the will of God, and an effect of his wisdom, that there should be different degrees of glory; and that order which God hath established is most equal and amiable in their eye. He that hath the lowest degree of glory, he is as well satisfied as he that hath the highest; because it is according to the will of God: in that variety, and in those several degrees of glory, the order and wisdom of God appears. I will express this to you by a similitude, that you may all understand it. As in an instrument of music there are several strings of different sizes and sounds, some strings have a higher and sharper sound, others a lower and graver note; from which variety all the harmony doth result. Now if the strings of this instrument were capable of making their choice, every one would be in that place where it is set, because all the music and harmony ariseth from this distinction and variety; so every saint in heaven hath that degree of glory that infinite wisdom hath appointed; and therefore he would choose it because it is according to the divine will and wisdom, and because in all that variety there is harmony, and beauty, and sweetness. So that this is not prejudicial to that holy and perfect love that reigns in heaven, for all is love, and all is joy and peace there. Now this is one part of the joy of heaven; the "apostle" speaks of it, Heb. 12. 22. "But ye are come to Mount Sion, the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the gene-

ral assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, &c."

CHAP. VI.

The chief happiness of this rest lies in the enjoyment of God. The joy of heaven is exceeding great, because it is correspondent to the majesty and greatness of God; and proportionable to the love he bears to his people, and to the infinite price of the blood of Christ. Christ is enjoyed in heaven, and God, on whom the saints' love is entirely fixed, and there God most fully communicates himself to them, and immediately.

I Shall now proceed to speak of the most substantial part of the joys of heaven, and that is our enjoyment of God himself: all other things divines express by the accessions and additional joys of heaven; but the substantial and essential joy therefore is in God himself.

Before I speak of this, there are three considerations which I shall lay down to raise your thoughts; that though it is impossible that we should fully understand that joy before we come thither, yet these may help us by degrees to ascend to a higher apprehension of it.

1. The glory, blessedness, and rest of heaven, is that which shall be answerable and correspondent to the majesty, greatness, and magnificence of God, who is the preparer and giver of it: gifts are usually proportioned to the state and degree of those that give them. You read in the book of Esther concerning the Persian monarch; he designed an entertainment for all his princes and servants, and the powers of Persia and Media, and the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred days; Esth. 1.

4. 5. "And when these days were ended, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small for seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace." You read there how pompous and great this entertainment was for all his subjects: there were vessels of gold of different forms and figures; for it is said, "they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being divers one from another) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of a king." Thus you see what splendour and magnificence there was in this entertainment. Now consider with yourselves when the king of heaven will prepare a glory and a blessedness, whereby he will show the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty: O who is able to understand it while we are here below! The angels above cannot comprehend it. It is observable, that this is attributed to God's immediate making and preparing, Matt. 25. 34. "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." It was prepared by God before the foundation of the world was laid. Now those things which are immediately made by God have the clearest signatures and marks of his excellent perfection; there is the most glorious refulgence of his attributes shining in these things. It is observable, that those things which God hath made by his command are not so excellent as those things which he hath made by his hand: he spake the word, and gave his command concerning other creatures, and they were made, Gen. 1. 20. "And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly; the moving creatures that have life, and fowls that may fly above the earth, in the open firmament of heaven. And God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after his kind, and it was so. And God said, let us make man in our own image and likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." Whereas God spake the word, and other creatures were made by his command: he made man by his own hand, as the most excellent piece of this lower world. So heaven and the glory of it is made by God's own hand, it was made by God himself, as the expression of his power, greatness, majesty, and goodness.

2. The next general consideration is this; the glory of God is that which will bear a proportion to that love of God which he hath to his people. It shall be a noble expression of that love, and suitable to it. Now to make you a little to understand the force of this: God hath a general love to his creatures, and a special love to his children, to those who are his friends and favourites.

(1.) There is a general love that God bears to mankind in this lower world, as they have the title of his creatures: that love hath declared itself in making this world so pleasant an habitation for man as he is in his natural state. Now pray consider with yourselves; God hath made a thousand things in this world, which are not absolutely necessary for the support of our lives, but for the refreshment, and comfort, and pleasure of them; and this is from his general love to mankind. How many stars are there that adorn the firmament in the night? which are a most pleasant spectacle, but are not so absolutely necessary for lights. And how many things are there which are for pleasure and delight, which are not necessary for the support of life.

(2.) God hath a peculiar love to his children, and that love he hath designed to glorify in heaven: therefore you shall find, Eph. 1. 6. the great work of redemption, both as to the accomplishment of it, and the actual bestowing the fruits thereof upon us; the great end of it is said to be to the praise of the glory of the grace of God; the glory of his love; that love which warmed his breast from eternity with thoughts of compassion towards man; this love he will glorify in heaven; and he hath prepared such glory and joy for them, that they shall know he will love them like a God in an infinite and inconceivable manner. Do but a little ascend in your thoughts thus; 'Hath God made a beautiful world, so full of comforts and refreshment; hath he made this, and given it to rebellious contumacious sinners, those that live in open defiance of his laws and government? What then hath he prepared for those that love and serve him, in the kingdom above?'

3. Consider what that glory and blessedness must be which bears a proportion to the infinite price of the blood of the Son of God, which was shed not only to be a ransom to free you from hell, but as a price to obtain heaven for you: the saints obtain heaven not only by pardon and by gift, but with respect to the

Lord Jesus they obtain it by purchase; he purchased it for them; "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6. 23. Our Saviour left heaven, and endured a life of sorrow here in the world, and submitted to suffering and dying, that we might obtain heaven.

Now would he who is a just esteemer of things, give such an inestimable price for that which is not answerable to it? O certainly this is the highest step that we can ascend to here; heaven is such a glory, as is worthy of all that which Christ the eternal Son of God, and Lord of life did and suffered: therefore when we have spoken and thought according to the utmost extent of our minds, how short do we fall of that excellent and inconceivable glory! These are the directions I give you to raise your thoughts to consider how great this glory must be. Now I come to that which the scripture tells us is the heaven of heavens, and that is the enjoyment of God and Christ.

First, I will speak a little concerning the enjoyment of Christ's presence: now there may be a double consideration of it.

(1.) As Christ is the eternal Son of God, and possesseth the divine nature, with all the divine excellencies, and so he and the Father are one: and in what I shall speak concerning the enjoyment of God, the enjoyment of Christ, as the eternal Son of God, is included; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, being the same in substantial and essential glory: so the enjoyment of one is the enjoyment of every one of them: and indeed it is the sacred Trinity that is the fountain of our happiness, and of that glory that we enjoy in heaven. But 2dly, There is the consideration of the second person in the sacred and blessed Trinity, as united to the human nature; so as the glory of the Son of God shines through the human nature, and is communicated to all the blessed spirits above: and in this particular consideration I shall first speak of it. Now this is that which is both the desire of Christ, and is the most ardent desire of every holy soul, to be with Christ, and enjoy his presence. You shall see it in the prayer of Christ; "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." John 17. 24. They are words so full of love and joy, that Christ should pray to his Father, that they should be with him, and see his glory, that may both please and astonish us; that it should not content

Christ to be glorified alone, nor glorified with his angels, but that his poor servants, who here are humbled and loaded with afflictions, who have been in a mortal dying state, that they should be raised to his kingdom, and see his glory; it is an argument of the purest and dearest love that is conceivable. And as our Saviour here declares the most pure and ardent love to his people, so all those who are members of Christ have an ardent desire to be with him, and behold his glory; so you shall find the apostle Paul. "For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to be with Christ, which is far better." Phil. 1. 23. The apostle represents himself to be in suspense, being now drawn by two loadstones; the presence of Christ above, that drew him to heaven; and the good of the church below, that drew him and pressed him to stay on earth: I would fain be with Christ, yet I am willing to stay here for the furtherance of your salvation. Certainly every holy soul, though not in the same degree as Paul, has a desire to be with Christ, as Paul had; and that desire is a supreme overruling affection in his soul to be with Christ, to see his glory; and accordingly the joy of the soul is enlarged when it comes personally to be with Christ; for this is a rule, according to the degree of our love, is the strength of our desire; and according to the strength of our desire is the joy of fruition: this is a rule that runs through the affections; desire results from love, and takes its fire and heat from it; and joy is raised and intended according to the degree of our desire, when we come to possess the desired object. O my brethren, what joy overflows all the saints above! who are continually beholding the glory of Christ, and see the Deity shining forth in his human nature, see him advanced above all principalities and powers: and that which gives that sweetness of joy to them, is this; they shall see him thus glorified that died for them, and purchased salvation for them. This certainly is that which will render the beholding of Christ's glory infinitely pleasing to us; it was he that did accomplish it by his own sufferings; he did and suffered what justice required; he secured the honour of divine justice, that he might exalt the riches of divine mercy in our salvation.

Therefore I say, consider what infinite pleasure comes to an holy grateful soul, to see his Saviour thus raised, honoured, reverenced, and magnified, by all the powers in heaven: to think it is the Lord of life that gave his life for me that I see

thus advanced! And besides this, the sight of the glory of Christ hath a transforming power upon all the saints, they are made like him; so that in seeing this glory, they are glorified with him: for you must know that our Saviour not only was the meritorious cause of our glory, but also he is the pattern and the efficient cause of it: so that by seeing him in glory we shall be made like him, we shall be transformed into his glorious image. It is an observable expression which our Saviour hath, when he speaks to those servants that had improved their talents for the honour of their master; Matt. 25. 23. "well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee a ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy lord;" thou shalt partake of the same joy thy master doth. This is that which makes the saints unspeakably happy above; they shall be with Christ, they shall be satisfied with his glory, and in their conformity to it: for all the saints shall be conformed to the human nature of Christ glorified, as to their pattern and their great exemplar: "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Phil. 3. 21. And our souls in heaven shall be conformed to his glorious soul.

(2.) That which is the highest glory of heaven, is the enjoyment of God himself. Now for the opening of *this* to you, we are to consider first that rule I gave you before, that according to our love and our desire, such will be our joy in possessing the desired good. Now every saint hath a desire towards God, and a love to him; which I shall briefly open to you under these two considerations: 1st. That their love and desire is entirely fixed upon God himself; so that all other things without him cannot make them happy. The love of the saints to God is entire to him, as the fountain of that felicity which alone can make them blessed. You shall find this in David, Psal. 27. 4. "one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple:" where you see that he fixed his desire upon God, as the sole object of his happiness: for indeed true happiness is neither *absque Deo*, nor *extra Deum*; it is neither without God, nor out of God; it is in God himself: there is absolute perfection, where God is

enjoyed, who is the spring of happiness. If you could abstract in your thoughts all the inferior glories of heaven without God, you would leave heaven without itself. It is only God's presence which makes heaven. The saints' affections are entirely set on God; they do not only desire God as the proper object of their happiness, but they desire him with the strength of their affections; that is, the full enjoyment of God alone can satisfy them. They infinitely desire him. Therefore you shall find the psalmist, when he speaks concerning the ardency of his affections to God, he says, Psal. 42. 1. "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" These expressions set forth to us in a most lively manner, the ardency of his desire to enjoy God; his appearing before God, that is meant of the lower enjoyment of God in his ordinances: he was a banished person, and could not enjoy God in his tabernacle, the place of public worship. Now observe, this love and desire of the saints towards God is infinitely increased in heaven; therefore according to the love and desire we have towards God, so must be the joy that flows from his presence.

God doth most fully communicate himself to the saints in heaven. 1. By revealing all his amiable excellencies to their minds. Therefore it is said, Matt. 5. "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They shall see him with an intellectual eye; their understandings shall see all his glorious perfections, as much as they can receive of him; and only he that sees God, understands what a happiness it is to see him. It may be, several of you that hear me, while I am speaking to you of seeing the Lord, can no more relish it, than if you should put a cold piece of earth into your mouths; but he that is a saint indeed, hath some glimmerings of it, and some foretaste of it. To have a clear view of those divine excellencies which are the happiness of God himself, which are his natural blessedness; to see his beauty, the beauty of his holiness, and the glory of his power, and all his other attributes opened to you in the most enlarged manner; if our souls were but enlightened, and sanctified, and raised, this would be very sweet to us: the very hopes of it would be a heaven to us. Thus the scripture doth represent to us what heaven is: "without holiness no man shall see

God." Seeing God is the possession of his excellencies, by being brought to see and enjoy him. "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right-hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psal. 16. 11. God was from eternity a heaven to himself, infinitely glorious and joyful in himself: certainly then his presence must be a heaven to the blessed spirits. He that hath the revenues of a king, may easily discharge the expences of a small family. If God hath that infinite excess of happiness to make himself happy, he can easily make those happy that desire it. 2dly. This shall be accompanied with the most fervent love of him. Every soul in heaven is inflamed with the highest degree of love to God, and therefore infinitely pleased in the glory of God. Now from the sight of that glory, and that love that he showeth in giving that sight, that love we have to him is fed, and consequently our joy must always be in its spring-tide there, because we have the continual presence of God himself. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Psal. 17. 15. When my soul is perfected with righteousness and holiness, I shall see thy face and be satisfied. Whether you understand it of the likeness of God shining in our glorified Saviour or no, there will be satisfaction flowing from the discovery and enjoyment of God's perfection in heaven. The wise man tells us, "the desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." Prov. 13. 19. It is the triumph of the soul. Whenever a man hath a strong desire accomplished, it is the greatest pleasure to him. Do but consider then, what a paradise there is above, where all the desires are fully satisfied in God's presence. Do but seriously lay this to heart, whether is it possible to conceive any thing that is more joyful, than for the soul to have the most beloved, the most desired, and the most supreme good in its possession. Thus it is with the glorified saints above in heaven.

I shall not trouble you with a curious dispute, whether or no we shall see the essence of God in heaven; for such a discourse would be above your capacities and apprehensions. The scripture doth principally insist upon this, when it reveals heaven to us: we shall be blessed in the presence of God, we shall be happy in the fruition of him: therefore it is said, Rom. 8. 17. "we are the children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." And in the prophecy of

Isaiah it is said, that God shall be our glory. And the prophet Jeremiah, Lam. 3. 24. saith, which is principally accomplished in heaven, "the Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." Now for us who are here in this lower world, we have but narrow conceptions concerning the enjoyment of God: but the more the soul understands God, the more it knows what happiness there is in the enjoyment of him. I would have you observe, that the more any man understands what this world is, the less he enjoys it; for the more he discovers the vanity of it, the more he understands how foolish and deceitful this world is in its promises of happiness. Therefore Solomon, who had an inquiring mind, and power and riches answerable to his mind, after he had made a diligent search into all the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, the result is, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit:" he had a sickly distaste of all the pleasures and delight he had enjoyed in this world. But now the more the soul understands of God, the more it enjoys of God: for it finds the divine perfections to be so immense, as to be above all that it can express, nay above all it could conceive or distinctly desire. So that the more God is understood, the more he is enjoyed, esteemed, and delighted in: and therefore in heaven itself, where God is understood and loved in perfection, there he is enjoyed in perfection. And there is great difference between the soul's enjoyment of God in heaven, and on earth; those that are on earth enjoy not God so fully, clearly, and satisfactorily, because their enjoyment of God is mediately; either 1st, by creatures as secondary causes of comforts, as all things that in the order of nature are comfortable to us, they are but like cisterns that convey something to us from God our fountain: or else 2dly, he is enjoyed in his ordinances, in those sacred appointments wherein he hath promised to reveal and communicate himself, his grace and comforts to them. But now in heaven God's excellencies and perfections are communicated to the creature in a more immediate manner. When we taste any comfort in the creature, it all comes from God; that comfort we have in the creature is limited, but it is God that makes it comfortable, and communicates comfort to us by the creatures. God is the author of all that good we receive by them. It comes to us from him. That comfort which comes from God in the creature, is like liquor put into a bottle, that

takes off from its generousness and richness: so all the comforts that come from God through the creature, there is a diminution of them as they pass through the creature. But when we come to enjoy the immediate excellencies of God, his goodness, power, and holiness, and the like; this will be our heaven; there is nothing that shall eclipse or allay that comfort. That which comes from the presence of God immediately, is all pure and unmixed joy, replenishing and satisfying.

In heaven we shall enjoy God's immediate excellencies by knowledge and love. There we shall understand his eternity, omnipotence, immensity, his infinite holiness, and all other perfections, so far as we are capable of understanding them. And there is one consideration the scripture adds to what I am speaking; we shall not only enjoy the perfections of God immediately, so as no creature shall interpose between God and us, nor these ordinances, which are lower administrations; but we shall enjoy God without the interposition of our Almighty Mediator. 1 Cor. 15. 28. it is said concerning Christ our Mediator, "when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son himself also be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." I will open this briefly to you: in our present state we have no communion with God, but through Jesus Christ the Mediator, reconciling God to us, and making us acceptable to God. All the spiritual benefits we receive, they are conveyed to us through Jesus Christ our Mediator; for the holy and righteous nature of God can have no converse immediately with an unholy creature. The best saints in the world are unholy in part; and there can be no converse with God, but through Christ our Mediator. Now observe, the Lord Jesus Christ hath a supreme empire delivered him by commission from his Father; and this he is to manage till the adverse powers are entirely subdued, till the powers of earth and hell are all broken and vanquished. This is to be done by Christ as God-man. But when after the last day Christ shall by that supreme act of judgment cast the devils and all the wicked into hell for ever, and shall enter into heaven with his saints, then ends the government of Christ. That I may a little open this to you by a similitude or illustration that you will all understand: it is as if a king had a great part of his kingdom revolted from him, and those revolted subjects rising up in rebellion against him,

and he hath a design to recover them by his mercy and clemency, and those that would not be prevailed with, should be instances of his just severity. He puts his own son into commission, to invite those that are capable of mercy, to accept of pardon, and to subdue those that are rebellious, and obstinately resist his power and authority, and gives his son full empire for the accomplishment of this design. Now when he hath by the offers of mercy and pardon won some, and reduced them to their duty and obedience, and broken and subdued the rebellious party that continued in their opposition against him, he delivers up his commission to his father. Thus when our Lord Jesus, who received a commission from his Father to make overtures of mercy and pardon to those revolted creatures that were proper objects of it, and would thankfully accept of that grace that is rendered to them; and also to subdue and vanquish the rebellious, and break their power that obstinately and finally oppose and resist him; when he hath accomplished this, there is no further work for Christ as Mediator, to reconcile and appease God in heaven: for then God the Father, Son, and Spirit will glorify the saints immediately; so that there will be no interposition between a displeased God and sinners. For as the first creation of all things was from infinite power, wisdom and goodness of the blessed and glorious Trinity: so in heaven the felicity of the glorified saints is from the same blessed Trinity: for there is a concurrence of all the persons of the Holy Trinity in the happiness of heaven: the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are equally the fountain of that eternal blessedness the saints enjoy in their glorified state. O consider how happy the creature must be when it receives all from God's blessed treasury: when all that the creature can possibly receive, shall come from God immediately. And this is that which will cause that joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. If I would speak never so long on this subject all my thoughts and expressions would fall infinitely short of it. It is our happiness that we are incapable of understanding it: so that our incapacity turns to our advantage: it is infinitely above all we can ask or think, even this rest that we shall enjoy above with God.

CHAP. VII.

It is an eternal rest. For God's love is unchangeable to them, and so is theirs to him.

iii. ANOTHER excellency of this rest is this; as it is a holy and a joyful rest, so it shall be an eternal rest. Eternity is an inseparable attribute of true and perfect blessedness. Now in heaven there is such a glory and blessedness, as will not only satisfy all our desires, but will exclude all our fears. There shall never be any danger of losing it; nay, there shall never be any fear of losing it. Now for the opening of this to you, there are only three things I shall touch upon: First, To prove to you, that it will be an eternal rest. Do but consider, the love of God that is the cause of it, it is unchangeable. The love of God is unchangeably set upon his people. Thus saith the psalmist, "thy mercies, O Lord, are from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear thee." Consider the wisdom of God; it is impossible that he should change his love towards those that he hath chosen and consecrated to his service, and to be of his society, and in his presence for ever. It is impossible that he should change his love, because he did from eternity foresee what could fall out. There can be no cause why he should change his affection; for God is not man, that he should lie; or as the son of man, that he should repent. If one man love another, there may be something in the person that may cause his friend to withdraw his affection; but God saw man in the state of weakness and frailty; and if his love endured us in this present life, it will continue for ever; for his love is unchangeable and everlasting. 2dly. Consider this rest is everlasting, because there is no change shall ever be in those that are glorified. The saints shall persevere eternally in their love to God. In this world the affections of holy men to God are like the needle in the compass, though it tremble and point sometimes to the east or west, yet when it settles, it turns directly to its

beloved pole, that is, the north. So it is with the saints; God is their pole and centre, their desires, and their whole souls tend to him. They have some variation, some slips and falls from God, which may cause him to withdraw from them, and leave them under a cloud of sorrow: but in heaven holy souls are directly, fully, and constantly fixed upon God, without the least cooling or intermission of their affections, God is their exceeding joy, and that for ever. He is the everlasting object of their love and praise; so that there can be no cloud there: for God's love is unchangeable to them, and their love is unchangeable to him; and therefore it is impossible they should ever be turned from God; for the light of his countenance directs and governs all their minds and hearts. For consider here below; do you think any one that is thirsty will leave a clear flowing spring for puddle water? So it is impossible that holy souls in heaven should ever turn their affections from God. If God's love be unchangeable to them, and their love unchangeable to him, what can change their blessedness? If there were any power superior to God, that could put an end to their happiness, then they might fear; but all their enemies are cast into hell, and they have no less than the infallible promise of Christ to secure them: "because I live, ye shall live also," saith our blessed Saviour: if God lives and is eternally happy, we shall be happy for ever. They are in an everlasting covenant with him, and shall be in eternal communion with him. So that the rest in heaven is an immortal rest. There shall never be any diminution of their glory, no interruption of their joy, nor no end of it: "at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." To conclude all, we are poor short-sighted creatures; we do understand things by our senses, and are most affected with those things which do touch them.

Do but consider with yourselves, whatsoever is pleasant to you in the order of nature, whatsoever it is that may gratify your sensual faculties, if it were possible for you to take in all those pleasures the world hath, and strain them all into a cup, and drink them up at one draught, they are not all comparable to the least degree of that joy and glory that is above for one moment. If you could live the whole circle of time, from the first rise of the world to the end of it, and enjoy all the pleasures that all others have enjoyed in all successions of ages, they are

not to be named with one moment's enjoyment of God in heaven. As if one person could feel the poison and stings of all the torments, miseries, and calamities that all men endure in this world, it were nothing compared to the prepared plagues for the wicked in hell. If you have reason and faith to exercise your serious thoughts, nothing deserves your utmost endeavours but heaven. If you will not be guilty of the most stupid folly, then seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness of it.

CHAP. VIII.

The good will of God, and the sufferings of Christ, the supreme causes of bestowing this rest: yet it is a reward, and in what sense. Merit excluded by God's absolute right to our obedience, and the quality of our good actions; which proceed from spiritual powers, restored by free grace; and are very imperfect; and no benefit to God; and there is no proportion between them and heaven. The blood of Christ mingled with them does not make them meritorious.

IV. I shall, in the next place, proceed to prove, that this rest is reserved as a reward to the people of God; in the opening of this, I will show you,

First, What are the supreme causes of this, that so you may not misunderstand the notion of a reward.

Secondly, That this is a reward for the people of God; in what sense you must take it.

Thirdly, I will prove to you by clear irresistible arguments, that there is a rest remaining for the people of God.

First. There are two supreme causes of this rest the scripture speaks of: the first is the eternal pleasure and good will of God to prepare this rest for his people, and to prepare his people for it: so you shall find; "fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Our Saviour comforts

his disciples with this: where you may observe by the way, that it is not only said to be the good pleasure of God to give the saints this heavenly kingdom, but it is attributed to him as our Father: so that our possessing heaven is not by way of purchase, but gift. We are as heirs, as children of God; we are not purchasers, but inheritors of it, as the children of our heavenly Father. To bring this home to your bosoms, it is God's good pleasure to give this to his children as a Father, he dispenseth it to his children, and to them alone. There are two things included in the natural relation of a Father.

1. That he communicates being to a child; he is the secondary author of its life.

2. He communicates that life which he possesseth himself, as to the kind and nature of it: these two things are essentially requisite to denominate a man a father. Now that you may know whether you are the objects of this love of God, he gives it, 1st. To those that are born of him, that receive a new nature from him, John 31. 13. "which were born not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." 2dly. This new nature is called in scripture the divine nature, 2 Pet. 1. 4. "whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." Now there are two characters in this divine nature, whereby a saint is like to God; that is, the holiness and the immortality of that nature. 1st. The holiness of it; for God is a holy God, and his life is a life of holiness: and so all his children, to whom this heavenly kingdom is designed, are "holy as God is holy in all manner of conversation." 2dly. That holy nature hath immortality in it: so the apostle tells us, 1 Pet. 1. 23. "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever:" that which is bestowed upon us is an immortal seed, that shall be always springing up till it come to perfection. Bring this home to yourselves; are you under the good pleasure of God? Are you sensible of it, that you are heirs of his kingdom and love? It must arise from hence that you are his children. Consider further, the good pleasure of God is made here the prime cause that appoints this eternal kingdom unto his children; the good pleasure of God is that which dispenseth this glory to them, and at last will put them into the actual possession of it.

It is said to be his good pleasure, his love, his pure and mere mercy, Jude 21. "keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." It is a mercy which giveth us glory at the last: it is not only mercy that appoints it, but it is pure love that giveth us possession of it. 2dly. The next cause of this eternal rest which the saints have bestowed upon them is, the Lord Jesus Christ: so you shall find, Rom. 6. 23. "for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord:" where you see still that eternal life is attributed to God as a free gift. The Greek word signifies, most gratuitous, most free, undeserved, and the pure effect of grace. "The wages of sin is death;" that is, it is a righteous recompence of sin, eternal death: (for you must understand it by the opposition to eternal life;) eternal death is a righteous recompence of sin. If you consider that God against whom it is committed, so it deserves an eternal punishment; but the gift of God is eternal life.

If you consider the sufferings of Christ, or his obedience in those sufferings, it will appear that to him we owe eternal life: consider what that death was that he suffered for us, Heb. 2. 16. he expiated the guilt of sin, and dissolved that bond whereby we were obliged to eternal punishment, the death of Christ did that. If you could prescind and abstract the sufferings of Christ from his obedience, his sufferings might only free you from hell. But now the obedience of Christ was so perfect in itself, and so glorious to God, his obedience to the death of the cross, whose divine nature had an infinite worth in it, and whose human nature was spotless holiness, he procured for us a right to heaven; not only a freedom from ruin, but a right to a higher glory than was lost in Adam. Therefore we must attribute all to the love of God in Christ, on the account whereof the apostle breaks forth into a most solemn acknowledgment, Rev. 1. 5. "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Now with respect to Christ's redeeming us from hell, and bestowing heaven upon us, we owe to him homage, worship, and praise for the heavenly kingdom, and we shall praise him for

ever. So that here are the two supreme causes of this rest, the love of God, and the purchase of Christ.

Notwithstanding this, the scripture tells us, (and we may safely speak the words of scripture) that this rest is reserved as a reward to the people of God; so you shall find that expression, Matt. 5. 11, 12. where our Saviour encourageth the persecuted saints; "blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

Now for the understanding of this, you must distinguish; there is a double notion of reward. 1st. A reward strictly taken; and so a reward is a righteous recompence that is given to a person as an allowance for a due service, according to the proportion of its worth. So you shall find Deut. 7. God commandeth that we shall not detain the reward of the hireling, &c. But in this sense heaven cannot challenge any thing from God as a reward, in a strict sense.

There is a lower sense of a reward, and that is, when there is a recompence given for a service that was due, and mean in itself, but it is given from the bounty and pure liberality and riches of the rewarder. Now in this sense you must understand it, when heaven is said to be a reward of the doing or suffering of the saints, because in the order of giving, it is a reward after our service performed to God: it hath the nature of a reward, because it hath respect to the service of the saints; but not as a reward strictly due to that service; and that will appear if you do but consider,

1st. The quality of the person.

2dly. The quality of the service.

1st. Consider the quality of the person; and here are these things to be considered.

(1.) That God hath an absolute right to all his creatures, so that by their obedience to him, they can merit nothing. All their power of acting, and all their faculties are from him. They can deserve nothing; all is his own, 1 Chron. 29. 14. "Of thine own have we given thee," saith David: the product of our inward and outward strength; all our talents are from God. That I may illustrate this by a similitude that you all understand; the

apostle Paul wrote to Philemon, to prevail with him for a kindness to Onesimus; and it is an epistle very insinuating, where there is an intermixture of many powerful arguments. verse 8, 9. "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love-sake I rather beseech thee being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me; whom I have sent again; thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels." After the apostle had used all the address of love, he makes use of a strain that which is the most artificial and powerful, verse 18. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth ought, put that on my account." A strange piece of rhetoric with which he concludes his arguments: "I Paul have written it with my own hand, I will repay it; albeit I do not say to thee, how thou owest to me even thine own self besides." It was but a small return he desired at his hands, considering how much he owed to Paul; probably he was his spiritual father. Therefore gratitude might oblige Philemon to answer his desire in this. Had Paul such a right in Philemon as that he owed himself to him, being his spiritual father, and an instrument of his conversion in bringing him to the knowledge of Christ; how much more do we owe ourselves to God, owe all to him, and therefore can merit nothing of him?

(2.) Another thing, with respect to the quality of our persons is this, the meanness and vileness of our persons; so that whatsoever comes from us, cannot possibly merit any thing of God. Abraham was a great prince, and a man that had abundance of treasure; but when he speaks to God he abaseth himself, and says, Gen. 18. 27. "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." And John the baptist, though a person of eminent holiness, yet when he speaks of Christ, John 1. 27. "He it is who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose." And the blessed virgin who had the honour to be the mother of Christ, how doth she break forth into praises of the Lord, with a reflection upon her own meanness, Luke 1. 46. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for behold from henceforth all generations

shall call me blessed." We are so low, mean, and contemptible to God, that it is impossible we should oblige him: the whole world compared to him is but as the drop of a bucket. Now what a small part are we of that drop? Nay the whole world compared to him is but as the small dust upon the balance; nothing yea less than nothing, and vanity. So that there can be no obligation or merit arising from such creatures as we are.

2dly. If we consider the quality of our actions, it is impossible we should merit any thing from God.

(1.) Because all our spiritual powers are restored to us by the free grace of God. The apostle Paul saith, "We have no sufficiency of ourselves, as of ourselves so much as to think a good thought," Phil. 2. 13. "For it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure:" so that all our spiritual power and strength is from God: and it being entirely his, we cannot merit any thing from him. For all the power and strength we have, we owe it entirely to God and Christ; therefore John 15. 5. our Saviour compares himself to the vine, and the church to the branches, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." The branch hath no power or living juice of its own, but what it derives from the root. So all our habitual graces, and all our exercise of those graces, is from God and Christ; therefore there can be no merit on our part. For indeed our obligation is increased, by the exercise of graces, and we are debtors to him by it.

(2.) Do but consider what imperfection attends all our services; so that were there not a Mediator as well to make our services acceptable, as to justify our persons, we should be exposed to the displeasure of God: for the relics of sin stain and defile every service that comes from us.

The Holy Spirit is the immediate cause of every grace in us; but it is we that act and exercise grace. Christ is the author and finisher of our faith; but it is we that believe: the Spirit of Christ is the cause of our obedience; but it is we that obey; we are the next agents though he be the supreme cause.

There is a great imperfection in all our services that we perform to God: in our faith there is much of unbelief; and in our obedience, there are some degrees of disobedience; all our duties

have an alloy, and such blemishes in them as would expose us to the anger of God, did not God for Christ's sake, pardon and accept us.

(3.) Our services are of no advantage or benefit to God. "My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth." Psa. 16. 2. If you had the affections of an angel to praise God while you are upon earth, his majesty and glory would not be increased by all your praises: for "His glory is above the heavens." If the sun should shine upon a clear crystal glass, that should reflect the beams of the sun, it could never reach the body of the sun, so as to increase the light of it: so it is with us; God shines upon us by his mercies, and we reflect them back again by our praises and grateful acknowledgments, but his essential glory is not increased by it; our righteousness doth not profit him; you can lay no obligation upon him; none but those you do some kindness to, receive some benefit from you; God's glory is above all the power of the creature; he is immense, and infinitely above all our services, we cannot oblige him.

(4.) There is no proportion between what is done and suffered by us and the glory of heaven, for saith the apostle, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us." "I reckon," upon due weighing all things together, it is the result of my judgment, there is no comparison between the one and the other. When the apostle put them in the balance with the glory of heaven, the afflictions of this present life were light and inconsiderable. If sufferings, afflictions, and troubles are light much more is our obedience. If a father should see a child write a line after a copy, with an unskilful hand, and give him a twenty-shilling-piece for that writing, you cannot say this is a just reward; no, but from his father's love and bounty. So God gives us heaven for our service here, but there is no proportion between our doings and sufferings and that exceeding eternal weight of glory; it is purely from gift and unmerited bounty: though it be a reward in respect of order, given to us for sincere service, performed to him. Now the papists do stand stiffly and confidently for a strict reward: it is true say they, our works and services do not deserve heaven, but the blood of Christ mixed with them, may make them meritorious. If you should take the dust of

gold and mix it with sand and say it is worth so much, it is not the sand, but the gold that is to be esteemed and valued; for the mixture of the sand doth not make the gold of greater value: so our works mixed with Christ's merits are like gold mixed with sand. And therefore heaven is given with respect to Christ's precious blood, and not to our merits. Now it is observable that the papists, that build their hopes upon this fallacious and deceitful ground, do also very congruously determine, that it is our duty to live in doubt of heaven and salvation; for they look upon assurance as the effect of pride and rash presumption. So that by their doctrine there is no solid hope of salvation. How much better is hope and well grounded confidence in Christ, than doubtful fear. Heaven is bestowed from the rich bounty and liberality of God: it is a reward that hath respect to the sincerity of our service, and not to the real worth and value of it. For heaven is a reward that is merited only by the sufferings and obedience of our blessed Redeemer, who is the author of eternal salvation, to all those that love and obey him.

CHAP. IX.

This rest is certainly reserved for the people of God; because of the immutability of God's promise, which promise is agreeable to the general justice of God, and his special love to his people. The divine power is their great security. Why it is not given till after a life of service. This method most honourable to God, because hereby he tries their faith and love: and most comfortable to them.

I Shall now proceed to show you, that this rest is *certainly* reserved for God's people; and that I shall make apparent to you from these following considerations.

i. The immutability of the word of God, wherein this rest is promised to his people. There are many promises in scripture,

the subject matter of which is this; that there is a state of blessedness reserved for the saints. Rom. 2. 7. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life." Thus the apostle expressly sets forth this rest, which is a variation of it under several notions; and tells us, if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. If we suffer with him, that is, in imitation of his example, and in obedience to his commands, we shall then reign with him. Rev. 2. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The heaven is not more studded with stars, than the scripture with promises of this nature. Now it is true, before the promise is made, there is an absolute sovereign liberty in God, whether he will give such a right to the creature: but when God hath made a promise, he doth (as I may so speak) make himself a debtor to his servants; though you must not take it in a strict sense, but there is an obligation lies upon him to fulfil his promise. The apostle when he gives you an account of the foundation of his faith says, "For I know in whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day;" that is, I know him to be a holy and true God, upon whose promises I have a blessed dependance, they all being of infallible certainty. The truth of it is, the word of God when it is once passed, is a more firm assurance to us, than we can have, that the sun will rise the next day; a greater assurance is given to us, than all this regular course of nature, that is established by the works of his providence; for we cannot tell when the course of nature shall have its period. But we have a most uncontrollable assurance for that, which God "who cannot lie promised before the world began." God cannot deny the essential perfections of his own nature; therefore he will most certainly perform his promise. Upon this we may venture our hopes and our souls, as upon the most calm and clear security: God hath promised it, and he will do it.

ii. Let us consider those excellent properties in the divine nature which may still confirm our faith in the promise of God.

1st. This promise of eternal life to his servants is that which is consentaneous to the general justice of God, "Say to the righteous it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked it shall be ill with him, for the

reward of his hands shall be given him." The general righteousness of God hath so disposed the distribution of rewards and punishments, that those that fear him, though indeed they can deserve nothing of him, yet from his pure love and according to his justice and righteousness they shall have a reward. The wicked indeed, according to strict justice, shall be rewarded; so the apostle speaks 2 Thes. 1. 6, 7. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us;" that is, according to the holy and righteous nature of God. It is not according to strict justice, but there is a clemency of God manifested in the pardon of sin, and his admirable love and bounty in recompensing the righteous: yet it is consentaneous to his justice that those who serve him as sons do a father, he will spare them and reward them.

2dly. It is according to his special love. It is not only from general justice, but special love and goodness is the fountain of this promise. Pray observe how God deals with his chosen people; the foundation of all his blessings is love, a love that is free and unmerited, a love that is rich, and glorious, and liberal; this love proceeds from one thing to another; God gives, that he may give; he gives his people grace that he may give them glory. He begins the work of holiness in them here, he perfects the work he begins, and he crowns the work he perfects and all from free love. This is the foundation of his promise, that love that is rich and free and glorious, so that one mercy to them is the earnest of another, and his promises are so concatenated that where he gives grace he will give glory.

3dly. The divine power is our great security; that God can and will accomplish those promises that he hath made to his people. "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." 2 Tim. 1. 12. What is the depositum Paul commits to God? I know divines generally interpret it of his departing soul. A believer when he comes to die, resigns up his soul (as his Saviour did) into God's hands. This seems not to be the true meaning of the apostle here, for while a man hath a soul living in his body, and in his possession, it cannot suit with the notion of a depositum; for a depositum is that which is out of my possession and committed to the hands of another: therefore this depositum is the crown of

life and glory which God hath promised to believers; a believer trusts it with God. I have trusted my eternal happiness with God, the crown of life I trust with him. He is gracious and powerful, and can bring me through all the dangers and temptations and troubles of this present world to eternal felicity; although they interpose between me and the divine world, and my body must descend to the grave before I can obtain life, yet I know divine power can raise me from the dead and bring me to eternal life and glory.

It is an interesting inquiry, which next demands our attention; *why this rest remains*, and shall be given us *afterwards*. At present it is an unseen rest, it is above our reach, *it remains*, saith the apostle, we do not possess it yet. Why is God thus pleased to dispense and give us it? I answer;

1. In general; the infinite wisdom of God appears in the order of giving; observe the expression of Paul, Eph. 1. 8. The apostle in these words hath a respect to the particular foundation of the gospel-covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. God did in a wise manner order that the honour of his justice might be secured and yet his mercy advanced. The apostle, speaking of the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Christ, herein appears saith he the wisdom of God to *honour* his justice and holiness, and advance the riches of his grace; the wisdom of God appears in the whole constitution of the gospel, in framing the covenant of grace so, that rest and blessedness shall be dispensed as a future reward, to the people of God, that are obedient to the death: so that as the combat goes before the triumph; and the race before the crown, so a life of service and obedience always goes before the eternal enjoyment of God above.

2. More particularly. It is that which is most honourable to God; and infinitely comfortable to his people. *Honourable* to God;

(1.) As he is pleased to honour himself, by the trial of their faith, which is a grace of that precious nature and importance, that the apostle Peter tells us, that the trial of it is much more precious than gold. 1 Pet. 1. 7. How honourable is it to the truth and power of God when a believer doth give credit to his relation of the unseen world, firmly believing, that there is another life after this; another happiness that sense cannot discover; as firmly believing this as if he saw it. What an honourable

testimony is this to God, when his word shall be such a security, that we can venture our all upon it! Abraham when he had given such an excellent testimony of his faith, believing the promise of God that he should have a son in his old age, though he was dead in nature as to generation, it is said, he believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness: God esteemed that as a noble testimony of his faith, and consequently rewarded him for it. So those who are clothed with flesh, and are conversant only with sensible objects in this lower world, when they can give such credit to the promise of God concerning invisible and eternal things, as to govern themselves entirely in their lives, with respect to them; this is giving God as much glory as we are able while we are in this state.

(2.) For the trial of the truth and strength of our love to God, whether we will prefer the enjoyment of him hereafter before all the pleasure of this fading world. Love is best discovered by comparison and choice: when things are presented to your will, and you despise the allurements of the one, and chose the other, this discovers love. There are in competition with you the vanities of the world gilded over, and very pleasing to sense; but God sets against them an everlasting reward in heaven, the enjoyment of himself as our portion. Now when in the midst of all these tempting vanities, I chose God for my portion (Lam. 3. 24.) though that choice divest me of all that fools admire, and that carnal men choose; it declares that my love to God is cordial and real, is predominant, and hath a pre-eminence above all other affections. How honourable is it to God, when the creature loveth him above life, and all the comforts of life! God reserves this reward then, for a trial of our love.

(3.) He is honoured by our sincere obedience. Did a present temporal reward always attend holiness, who could tell whether men served God for nought or no? You know the devil cast it as a reproach upon Job, when God had hedged him about, and given him a princely abundance, and he seemed the happiest man in all the east; as if Job's obedience to God, was merely the effect of that temporal happiness he enjoyed. But God is pleased to offer to us an eternal estate, and this estate is a future one, and an estate that hath many incumbrances upon it, that must be removed before it be enjoyed. You must pass through many difficulties on the one hand, and on the other; and you cannot

come to it without dying; and whether it be a natural death, or a violent one you cannot tell. Our obedience is from pure love to his majesty; for the rest that is in heaven, is the enjoyment of the law of God: so it is pure love that can animate a christian to despise all things in comparison of God. Now consider how honourable our superlative love is to him. It is true it would be equally bounty for God to take a person to heaven as soon as he hath formed him; but it is more honourable to God, when we have such a love to him. And hence it is most *comfortable* to God's people; and who would not choose such a way as doth most clearly and undissemblingly express our love to God?

CHAP. X.

Application of the Subject.

How sad is the future state reserved for God's enemies. The false principles and motives of their present peace: false apprehensions of the mercy of God: future purposes! Plunging themselves into worldly business and pleasures. A miserable state remains for them. They shall be deprived of this rest; which alone will be very afflictive, because they shall perfectly understand what they lose; that this is owing purely to their own folly, for the sake of perishing vanities. They shall be in a state of positive misery, directly contrary to the happy state of heaven; and an eternal one.

IF there be such a rest "remaining to the people of God;" we may hence infer how sad is that future state that remains for God's enemies in another world. And these contraries being set together will illustrate one another. O the heavy doleful state that remains for those who are rebels against God! It is true, here they may have rest; they may be quiet and undisturbed in their minds, and sleep securely in the very shadow of death. But O the fearful awaking they will have when they come into

eternity! O the strange convulsions of conscience then, and those dreadful disorders and tumults that will be in their souls! To make this more clear and affecting to you, I will a little touch upon those false principles and motives of peace and rest that wicked men have here, which will shortly all be taken away: and then I will show you what a restless condition they will be in, in the next life; what an incessant remorse will torture them to the days of eternity.

As to the false principles of reason, there are some that are very obvious and very necessary to touch upon. We find that these two attributes of conscience meet together, a bad conscience and a quiet. None more secure, none more undisturbed, than those that are in infinite danger of ruin. And although God tells us, there is no peace to the wicked, there is no solid well-grounded peace; yet the scripture tells us in another place, Deut. 29. 19. "And it comes to pass when he hears the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man."

1. I will show you a little the vanity of this peace. Now that which lies at the bottom of all is this: they have false apprehensions of the mercy of God. They have a false peace and we cannot rob them of it, but whatsoever is spoken to them against it, they notwithstanding still cherish it. It would be a great charity to rob them of this false peace; but they will flatter themselves, and say, God is infinitely merciful, and they hope, he will not be so severe as preachers declare him to be. Nay though the book of God hath threatening and thundering words against the wicked, yet they are no more afraid of those threatenings, than a company of boys are of their squibs and crackers which are of their own making. God is more gracious than he is represented to us, say they; therefore they will put their souls to venture. I shall only tell these deceived wretches, that though they can never enough amplify the mercy of God, for it is infinite; let them remember, God's mercy is a holy mercy, and a just mercy: and there are other perfections in God besides his mercy, and that God will glorify his mercy in a way suitable to his own nature. O vain man, never be bold upon this attribute,

whilst thou hast the character of one of God's enemies. Observe the Lord Jesus Christ, the meek Lamb of God, who was made of love and mercy; observe what he saith to the pharisees, which is applicable to all wicked persons, Mat. 23. 33. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers how can you escape the damnation of hell?" With what zealous indignation doth he speak! Perhaps you may think you are not such sinners as the pharisees. Do not deceive yourselves; all that are unregenerate are a generation of vipers, Rom. 1. 29. 30. Read that catalogue of sinners being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, &c. Such as these shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. You think you may obtain heaven because you are such as these; but see what is written, John 3. 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Consider, I beseech you, in what a solemn manner our Saviour speaks this to Nicodemus. This Christ himself the purchaser of divine mercy hath assured us of. What a vain thing is it to be at rest with false presumption, that a man shall do well because God is merciful; while he doth not believe what God declares of his justice and holiness.

2. Another common motive of their rest and quiet is this; press them to a speedy turning to God, then they will tell you, that they will secure their title to heaven at *some future time.* They think they have time enough yet: they will escape hell by an act of future repentance. But O dread this and consider the certain shortness and uncertain continuance of life! O remember if it please thy Judge, thy death is as near thee, as thy sin that deserves it! Thou canst not have the least security that thou shalt survive this sermon. Therefore to put off repentance is such folly and stupidity that no man would be guilty of in a temporal respect. Were it not commonly practised, one would think it so absurd a folly, that human nature were incapable of it. We carry our lives in our hands as David speaks. "There is but a step between us and death." If sickness should seize you suddenly, how terrible would it be to have the *first death* and the *second* invading you at once!

3. Another motive and false principle is this; they plunge themselves into the business and pleasures *of* the world. Into

the *business* of the world; all their senses are abroad, not so much as one sense stays at home to consider their state. They are never left at freedom to think, what their condition is. Others are dipped in *pleasures*, and they follow the vicious stream of their own hearts pleasantly and nothing disturbs them. It is just as when the wind and tide go together, the stream is calm and smooth; so while their hearts, and the things of this world join together, while the current runs one way, they are at peace. But remember when the wind blows against the tide, all the waves are tumultuous and impetuous, and break into rage. So there is a time coming, when this world shall blow contrary to you; then you shall be distressed; then there will be time enough for an uncomfortable remembrance of your folly.

These are some of the false grounds upon which men cherish rest here, and will not be brought out of the possession of it. But this will not last long; you may please and ravish yourselves with sensual delights and dreams till the justice of God awakens you; and in the next life there is nothing but sorrow and trouble and anguish and vexation. There is no rest unless you can rest in chains and flames of fire, and under the gnawings of an eternal worm and the everlasting wrath of God. If you saw a person upon a rack, his body stretched and tortured, and all his bones disjointed; can such a one have rest? then you may have rest in hell! Do you think that one who lies under the torturing pain of the stone or gout, and every pang cuts like the very pang of death, do you think that such a person can take any rest? All the parts of the body and all the powers of the soul shall be tormented in hell: as they shall feel those torments, fears, and sorrows, which shall prey upon them in that endless state.

Hence we may infer how miserable will be the state of those that are strangers and enemies to God. For the blessed rest is only prepared for God's people. This inference is so well grounded, that it admits of no doubt, as we find in Rev. 14. 13. "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Where you see this blessedness is appropriated to those that die in the Lord. From whence we have this clear deduction; "Cursed are those that die in their sins."

He that dies in Christ is blessed, for he goes to the fountain of his life: but he that dies in his sins, carries that heavy weight with him that will sink him into the abyss of misery. This doth not respect only those that live in gross sins, those that are desperate and dissolute; but it is a bar against all those that are unregenerate and unrenewed. 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. You have a catalogue of notorious sinners, "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind; nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." But it may be now you will bless yourselves in your hearts, to think that you are not of this number; my brethren, remember what the Lord of life tells you, John 3. 3. with an asseveration, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." If you have not a reformed mind, a reformed will, and reformed affections; and if your lives be not reformed you can never enter into God's kingdom. In short before I go to a more particular opening of this, take a character of those persons he excludes from the reward in these three particulars.

1st. All those who are contrary to the nature of God who is infinitely holy shall be excluded from this rest. Wherever there is one sin in dominion this doth imply a standing contrariety to the nature of God; whatsoever sin it be whether it is visible to the eyes of men or no, or whether it is a secret sin, if it hath a throne in your hearts, this implies an utter contrariety to the nature of God. It is impossible for such a person to be received into this rest. You may sooner reconcile night and noon-day, than the presence of God with such creatures. The truth is, if they could be transported to heaven by divine power, heaven would be no more heaven to them, in whom there is a contrariety to the nature of God. To make it sensible to you all; there is nothing in the world more pleasing and more refreshing than the light of the sun to a sound eye; for light is that which makes the whole creation beautiful and pleasing to us; yet there is nothing more uneasy or more vexing to a sore eye corrupted with humours; therefore such persons will seek for retirement, make every thing dark, because the light of the sun will so afflict them. Indeed the presence of God is a heaven to a holy soul; but to those that are contrary to his holy nature, it is not so, therefore

it is that they are objects of God's rejection; he cannot take delight in them, and they cannot delight in him, there being a fundamental opposition in the nature of God to such sinners, and in them to God; therefore you may be assured, that all such shall be excluded from this rest.

2dly, The notion of God's people implies obedience. Now by way of opposition; those that are rebels against his law and government, are none of his people; those that live in a known violation of his precepts, are all rebels to him. They may, indeed, own his government in words, but if it were in their power they would pluck him from his throne and set up another king, the God of this world. These are excluded from this rest.

3dly, Those that are not affectionate to God's glory, nor concerned for his interest in the world, they are none of his people, they are all to him. Those who, if they can preserve their own private interest, let the affairs of the church sink or swim; if they can have a flourishing prosperity in their families, let the cause of God decline or prosper, they care not; these are none of God's people, they shall be excluded from this rest.

This being now laid as that which shall direct you in all I speak after, I shall proceed, and being now to speak to you of the most unpleasing subject, the torments of hell, I shall only say this, that were not the subject necessary, it is that which of all subjects a gospel minister would be most unwilling to speak of. For as God himself hath prepared and threatened hell for this end, that men might choose heaven and avoid hell: so none that hath a heart like our Saviour, but whenever he doth open these treasures of God's wrath to you, doth it merely upon this account, that you may escape them and be compelled to turn into the way of life.

This state of misery, which is contrary to the rest I have been speaking of, the scripture sets forth to us in that manner that may most affect and arouse us. So the apostle, Rom. 2. 7, 8. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Now that which I observe is this, the Holy Spirit doth by variety of expressions signify to us the extremity and perfection of that misery that is in hell; he calls it indignation and

wrath, tribulation and anguish, to enlarge your apprehensions concerning the perfect misery of that state. As it is said before of heaven, that it is a state of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life; and all to raise your apprehensions, and attract your desires after heaven; so here you have expressions multiplied to impress upon you the fearfulness of that state. As in heaven all is composed, for the comfort, joy and blessedness of the saints; so in hell all is prepared for the torment and misery of the wicked. All within them and without them is to aggravate their misery. The judgments of God in this life, which he lays upon sinners, here in the day of his patience and clemency, are many times very heavy, and exceed the strength and courage of men to bear them; but all of them are nothing to that full vengeance, that complete recompence of sin, that God shall bring them, in the day of his righteous judgment. We read Deut. 29. 19. an expression of Moses to the Israelites; "And when it comes to pass he hears the words of this curse, and he bless himself saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, and add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man." All the judgments of God in this world against sinners, are but the smoke of hell-fire; no more comparable to the enduring the torments of hell, than the feeling hot smoke to the burning of hell itself, as those intermediate comforts which God gives us in this life are nothing to the consolations, which he will give us in heaven; so all the temporal evils which the wicked meet with here, are nothing to the torments of hell. This being laid down in general, I shall come to open it to you more particularly.

1. The first thing which is considerable is this; *the deprivation of this blessed rest,* which none who are enemies to God shall ever obtain. When the great King shall call the world to judgment, and pass a sentence upon the wicked, the first part of the sentence will be, "Depart from me," that is, depart from Christ, who is the fountain of life and joy, whose presence is the heaven of heavens. "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Mat. 25. 41. The carnal sinner will think with himself, if it be but the loss of heaven I shall do well enough, if that be all damnation signifies, I shall

not be much concerned; but now to make you understand the dreadfulness of this sentence, consider.

(1.) You shall then more perfectly understand what that blessedness is you lose; and so you shall feel yourselves infinitely miserable upon this account. Indeed in the present state, the carnal unbelieving heart despiseth heaven, he looks upon nothing to be substantial, solid good, but what is sensible to his lower faculties. We preach heaven to them, which they think is but an airy happiness, a notional thing; there is no seeing or feeling, or tasting of it. So the carnal wretch thinks the loss of heaven will be an easy thing. But in the other world their sight shall be cleared, and their judgments changed, they shall know what they lose, and that loss will be accompanied with stings of conscience, and those dreadful tearings of themselves, that it is impossible to conceive. When Elisha said, thus saith the Lord, about this time to-morrow, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God, and said, behold if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? and he said behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. 1 Kings 7. 1. I apply it thus; the damned shall see the glory of heaven, but they shall not partake of it. They shall see it only to their terror and sorrow. Now to put it in an ordinary case: if a man hath made a foolish bargain, and after comes to understand his folly in parting with such a thing, the price and value of which he did not understand, it will cause troublesome reflections upon himself. I remember a story, that when Charles the bold, one of the dukes of Burgundy, took a great city, there was a jewel found of incomparable value; the soldier that found it sold it for four florins (about twenty shillings) but after it was sold for many thousand pounds. If the soldier had known the price afterwards, how it would have enriched him, it would greatly trouble and vex him, that he had made so foolish a bargain. The wicked part with heaven foolishly, and lose it for trifles; but when they come to understand what a jewel it was, of what incomparable value, it will greatly afflict them; and the remembrance of their folly will be always grating upon their spirits and torment them. In hell, shall be "weeping, wailing and gnashing

of teeth" when the wicked shall see "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and themselves shut out for ever." This will cause dreadful tormenting reflections, though now possibly you may pass it over with slight unconcerned thoughts.

(2.) They will owe this privation to their own folly and wickedness, and this will be as tormenting as the loss itself. And because this is so material a thing I will open it to you.

I speak now of those that live under the gospel, they shall not be able to pretend, that they are ignorant of this rest, and therefore fall short of it; no, for our Saviour hath abolished death, and brought light and immortality to light through the gospel. Our Saviour hath, as it were, rent the veil of heaven, and given us a discovery of the glory there. He did not only reveal heaven to us, but rose from the dead to give us an argument and an example of that blessedness that all his believing members shall be raised unto. He hath brought life and immortality to light, so that there can be no pretence of ignorance. Under the law they had but as it were a twilight, some faint glimmerings of this state; but now it is clear and open to all, that there "remains a rest to the people of God." So that they shall never be able to say, they never heard of heaven.

Again; as they cannot say they never heard of heaven, so neither can they pretend it was never offered to them: for in the preaching of the gospel, there was a continual offer of the kingdom of heaven. The very threatenings of hell were in order to make men accept of heaven. All the commands, all the entreaties, all the threatenings of the gospel centre in this, to make people willing to accept of heaven. They are all concurrent means, to make you "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness." None are excluded from the promise of God. Whosoever will let him take of the waters of life freely. So that there is not a bare possibility of obtaining, but a certainty, if you be not wanting to yourselves, and if you be not rebellious against God; this will be another aggravation.

(3.) Hell will be increased by this consideration; that although heaven is revealed and offered to us, it is not offered upon impossible terms, upon such conditions as the human nature cannot comply with. No, this cannot be pretended; for whatsoever difficulty there is with reference to our corrupt affections, or our unprepared hearts, yet nevertheless the divine glory is so

freely and richly offered to men in the gospel, that if they will accept of it, they shall be conquerors over all obstacles; God offers his Holy Spirit to them that ask it. "If earthly parents, who are evil, know how to give good things to their children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it?" Now the Holy Spirit by his assistance, will make every command easy. He will make the yoke of Christ an easy, gracious, and benign yoke. Now to make this sensible to you; it is with a sinner in his carnal, corrupt state, with respect to the things of God, as it is with a man in a burning fever or dropsy, that cannot abstain from drink: I cannot forbear drinking, saith he, for I am almost burnt up; but if a physician comes and tells him, I will give you a julap that will quench your thirst; now if he refuses it, he dies voluntarily and wilfully. Men have dropsy desires after the world, and are inflamed with an insatiable thirst after it; but saith God, I will give you my Spirit that shall change and purify you from all those vicious affections that make you thirst after earthly things. Now they grieve the Spirit of God, resist it, and quench all the holy motions; they will not comply with it. It is hence evident, that they are guilty of their own ruin; all this loss of heaven is from their own choice, and the natural effect of their own perverse wills. The sinner will not be able to stand under the burden of these thoughts, I have lost heaven because I would not have it; this will be more tormenting than all the infernal fiends, that, their loss of heaven is owing purely to their own folly.

(4.) To show you what a hell it will be to lose heaven, a sinner shall then reflect for what perishing vanities he lost heaven; he shall be able to make a true comparison between what he lost, and that which he lost it for. This is consequent to the former, because he shall know what heaven is. The great reason why men pursue the things below, is because they undervalue the things above; they have no esteem, no taste for them; but then they shall be able to understand what heaven is. Then it will appear what a wretched bargain they made to part with heaven for these things. O when the considering soul shall come to compare things, to think that I have lost the perfections of heaven for vexing and transient vanities, we cannot conceive the detestation the soul will have of itself. That the soul

which was a spiritual, immortal being, should for sensual, transient vanities lose heaven! When you hear at any time of a person mixing with a brute, it raiseth a disdain in you, and you will count that person the worst brute that doth so. He that sets his heart upon the world is a more prodigious monster; he that joins an immortal spirit with spiritual dust. The soul will aggravate its misery that it brought upon itself for such mean and cheap vanities.

Again; that which will be an aggravation of this loss of heaven is, it is then irrecoverable; the day of mercy is expired, God will be justly inexorable to all their lamentable cries. For the time of his patience being expired, pure and strict justice takes place, and will exact from the sinful creature the payment of the rights of it for ever.

2. Now besides this *deprivation* of the rest of heaven, there is a *positive* and contrary state of misery, that those which are rebels to God shall be plunged into. To open this briefly, consider, that hell is represented to us in those expressions that have an absolute direct contrariety to the state of heaven, and all to signify the positive misery of that place. For example; heaven is said to be an inheritance of light; 1 Cor. 12. Hell is said to be a region of darkness, perpetual darkness, Jude, 13. you have an expression so strong and full, that nothing can exceed it; "they are wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." O that thick and disconsolate darkness that shall never be refreshed with the least star, no, not with one spark of light; blackness of darkness, darkness that may be felt, like that in Egypt. Heaven is said to be a place of joy; "in thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." But in hell there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. All which are expressions of desperate sorrow. Sometimes in scripture heaven is set forth by springs of refreshing water; so you have an expression which may be applied to heaven, Rev. 7. 17. "for the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." It signifies both refreshment and abundance of that refreshment that is in heaven.

It is said that hell is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone; where the damned shall be drowned in flames, and burned in streams for ever. A strange expression, a lake that burns,

&c. In heaven the saints shall be always praising and glorifying God, they are filled with joy, and it breaks forth with overflowing thanksgivings. But in hell there is blaspheming God, and cursing the Holy One, that is blessed for ever. So it is said concerning those that are punished in hell, Rev. 16. 10. "and the fifth angel poured forth his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pain and their sores, and they repented not of their deeds." Ver. 21. "And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent, and they blasphemed God because of the plague of hail, for the plague thereof was exceeding great." Hell is the region of misery, they blaspheme God there for the extremity of their torment.

It is said of heaven, it is the saints' rest; they have a sweet and calm repose in the enjoyment of God. There a believer can say, "return to thy rest, O my soul." But in hell they rest neither night nor day, but they are under continual tormenting reflections on their own wickedness and the extremity of God's wrath. They have no interval nor space of ease. They are always upon the rack; torn and miserable in their own sense for ever. The scriptures set forth the possitive torments of hell thus; and all this shall be for ever; the door is sealed upon them and their state is unchangeable, and they are continually restless, not only under the impressions of their present torment, but by the foresight that this shall never have an end. O this is the very hell of hell! O saith the forlorn wretch, if I could but live again, and have a trial, whether I would repent or no, or, O if I might at length die, and have an end of this torment, then hell would cease to be hell. But all their wishes shall be ineffectual, for they shall never have any ease or end. You cannot think they can free themselves by power. All the armies of darkness cannot resist the powers of an infinite God: our Saviour hath an expression applicable to this purpose, "bind them hand and foot, and cast them into utter darkness;" which implies, they have no power either to escape or make resistance. This is that which makes hell to be so terrible, after the damned have run through millions of years, the sum they owe to God's infinite justice is entire, they have made no payment yet. It is impossible to think of this without horror, that then a person

shall be entirely and eternally miserable. I remember what I have read, of one that was an impious atheist, who was struck at last with an ulcerous distemper that run throughout his body, and filled him with noisome vermin accompanied with the most cruel pain, that he was ashamed and afraid of society, and he retired into a private room; and when one asked him how he did, he put his finger or thumb through the hole of the door and bid his friend take notice and see how it was filled with ulcers and vermin, saying, just as this is so it is with my whole body. So the damned shall be miserable in all parts. Dives begged for a drop of water to cool his tongue, when he was tormented in the flames. It is not to be understood as if his tongue only was tormented, but by that we may make a judgment, how miserable he was in every part. But will not God change the sentence at last, when the damned creature has endured ten thousand years of torment? No, God will not repent nor retract his sentence. Not to speak of the desert of sin, nor the justice of God in it, that they preferred misery before heaven and happiness, they cannot complain of his justice in their punishment; because though these wretches are in perfect misery, yet their hearts are not changed to love a holy God; they are blaspheming and filled with rage against a holy God: they are continual objects therefore of his hatred, not only for their sins in this present life, but for that cursed enmity that is still in their hearts against him. As the most holy and powerful Judge, they eternally hate him; and they are the proper objects for his holiness, and justice, and power to work upon for ever. And they are not only objects of his hatred, but of his scorn and derision, "he will laugh at their calamities and mock when their fear cometh." If you believe the scripture, it is a wonder that any of you can live in an unrenewed state one day or hour. There is nothing more amazing than this, that any man that hath so much faith, as to believe an eternal hell, and hath not any love to God and holiness should be quiet one hour! Men will not part with their beloved sins though hell attends them. I remember reading of one who had a voracious appetite, that when he had meat laid on the coals to be broiled for him, he would snatch it up greedily, and eat the flesh and burning coals together. So some persons are set upon their lusts, though the coals of hell fire cleave to them. And if there was not a terrible

Judge to punish them, they would create a hell to themselves by reflecting upon their sins, which will bring them torment and anguish, and horror for ever.

Thus from what I have spoken you may see something of the doleful state that the enemies of God shall be cast into. And this may be a powerful persuasive to you to flee from the wrath to come, and to seek after the kingdom of heaven.

The sum of all is this; they are entirely and eternally miserable, they shall in hell be dead to all the joys and hopes of life; nay to all the hopes of dying, but alive to all the agonies, to all the torments of death for ever.

CHAP. XI.

We hence learn to understand this world with all its allurements: which can afford us no true content, as appears from the testimony of God, and the experience of man: nor is it of a permanent continuance. The sudden change that death makes will cause a quicker sense of misery in hell.

I Shall now pass on to the second use from this doctrine of the divine and blessed rest of the saints in the next world, which is this: from hence we may be instructed how to disparage this world with all its temptations, with all its allurements, whereby it deludes and destroys the souls of men.

There is a necessity to make use of the revelation of heaven and to compare this world with it, to take us off from its inviting efficacy; because that which diverts us from heaven, from seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness thereof is this world. This is the great temptation that the devil makes use of unto that end. And the world hath this advantage from its being present. It is the expression of the apostle, Gal. 1. 4. "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from

this present evil world." The world is that which we converse with, it is that which is hourly incumbent upon our senses. And so you shall find the force of that temptation upon Demas, the apostle puts it upon this, "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." And the great disadvantage that heaven has, is this, because it is a state that is future. And distance in time hath the same effect that distance in place hath. Distance in place makes objects of immense greatness as nothing to us; it lessens the angles of the eye so, that stars of the first magnitude are but like glittering spangles and sparks of light, though one of them be sixty times bigger than the whole earth. Though heaven is so glorious a blessedness, yet men look upon it at a vast distance, and so it lessens their esteem of it. And though God hath made such a revelation of this blessed state, that if reason ruled us we should abhor all things in comparison of it; yet because it is not at hand, lower things prevail with men, which are visible to their senses.

Now I shall endeavour to make a right comparison between this world and this heavenly blessedness, and show you what heaven is, and by a just deduction, I shall show you that there is nothing but folly and madness, or something worse, that can possibly incline the heart of men to neglect heaven, and pursue the world. Let us but consider and compare heaven, this eternal rest I have been speaking of, and this world, in these two respects, and you shall see, if you put them in the balance of the sanctuary, how light this world is, and how that exceeding eternal weight of glory will turn the scales; and accordingly you shall choose and pursue the things above. Heaven I told you consists in two things, to sum up what I then spoke: it is a state of perfect satisfaction, and a state of eternal satisfaction. Psal. 17. 15. "As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." What this likeness is, whether or no it be the essential glory of God, or whether it be that glory that eminently shines in the human nature of the Son of God, or whether it be that likeness of God, that shall appear in every saint, in every one of the blessed; take it as comprehending all these, "we shall be satisfied with God's likeness," in the next state, which is a state of true life; and in the eternal exercise of all the faculties of life. Now compare this world and heaven in both these respects, and you will

see an infinite disproportion. First, for the world and all its offers to us cannot afford us true content: and, Secondly, if it could, we have no permanent continuance; and you shall see in both these respects how incomparably heaven exceeds it.

1. This world can afford us no true and perfect content. And for this we have both the testimony of God, and the universal testimony of mankind. We have *God's testimony* in his word; so that if you will believe him that knows what is in the creature, and that put into it all those degrees of comfort and goodness that are in it; if you believe him he tells you that all worldly things have but the appearance of happiness, 1 John 2. 16. All that is in pleasure, riches, honour, is but vanity in masquerade, vanity gilded over with the appearance of happiness, and men are deceived with false titles and empty names. There is no such thing as true pleasure, true riches, and true honours in this world. These are too high titles for things below the moon; all the colour and false appearance of these things is maintained by those solecisms in language which are current in the world. We call them riches and pleasures and the like, but in truth they do not answer those names. Therefore the heart is still empty and full of anguish amidst all these things. Nay the very senses are not satisfied with them. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." Eccl. 1. 8. All this world cannot fill the emptiness of the eye, or the ear. Pray do but consider the wise and tender mercy of God to us, that he hath made these things, although necessary for the support of the present life, and some way refreshing and ornamental, yet nevertheless he hath not given them such a degree of good as shall satisfy the soul of man. What is the reason of it? It is his wise love. Wise love, that you may seek for happiness in himself. He hath declared what the world is, that you may not be deceived with it; he hath made it to be empty and unsatisfying, that you may seek for happiness in himself. I remember an observation of a philosopher, speaking of the wisdom and goodness of divine providence in making the winds in this natural world, that so they may be instrumental to men's discovery of foreign parts, that they may not be confined to the country where they are born.

The application is easy: the desires and affections in man are as the winds. God hath given you these desires to make you

seek after heaven. The affections are given to us, that not being satisfied with this world, we may seek after the world that is future.

Now what the wise man saith concerning riches, is applicable to all other things in the world, "wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" Upon that which doth not answer the title of it? You may call it substance, but it will never satisfy you. Will you set your hearts upon the world, which can never answer your affections, that can never give you true and perfect joy, where you cannot obtain rest for your souls? This should make you to seek earnestly after the kingdom of heaven. It is true, if there were not a revelation made of this happiness, all the arguments that I shall use would be of no effect; if you were as the heathen world, upon whom the Sun of Righteousness never rose, who never had a state of immortality and blessedness revealed to them. If you did think that because the soul and body are born together and live together, therefore they shall die together: that when one shall be resolved into the dust, the other shall vanish into the air; then it were wisdom for you to make the best of what you have at present. But when God hath promised us a heavenly and eternal rest, for a person to make the world his happiness, it is just as if a person should have the purest meats, and should choose to feed upon husks; or should pitch upon acorns, when he hath the choicest fruits of the earth to eat of.

Now to express this to you by a familiar and plain similitude, suppose that the moles, which are blind naturally, and never saw the light of the sun, nor the beauty of this visible world, if they keep their holes, and think there is no better state, and feed upon mean and bitter roots, and think there is no better food, you do not marvel at it. But if you see the birds of the air that behold the light of the sun, and feed upon sweet and pleasant fruits; if you should see them run into the holes and caves of the earth, you could not but wonder. If a heathen confine himself to the things of this lower world, and make them his happiness, he is like a blind mole that knows no better things to feed upon and delight himself with than these perishing pleasures. But for christians, those that pretend to believe and expect a heavenly eternal rest, that they should mind this world so as to neglect heaven; it is the most amazing prodigious folly.

For both reason and sense tell them that this world cannot give them true content. And we have the concurrent testimony both of God and man, for all persons must grant it, there is no true and perfect satisfaction here.

2. Suppose there were, there is no permanent continuance of it. It is an inseparable adjunct to all our enjoyments here, they are but temporal, they are but for a short space. For you are liable to one of these two things, either you shall have your end shortly, or they shall have their end. With reference to all you enjoy and possess, you shall have your end in dying; or your riches and enjoyments shall make themselves wings and fly away from you, before you leave the world. However, they shall not attend you one step beyond the grave, not one, not one moment beyond death.

Where sense is so convincing, one would think we should need no other argument to make us lay it to heart. 1 Cor. 7. 31. "For the fashion of this world passeth away," where the apostle intimates the vanity of it, it is but a fashion, it is but a shadowy happiness, there is but a mere appearance. This fashion passeth away, and what should more cause our undervaluing of it than this? Suppose it were greater than it is in its own nature, yet if it be always in a fleeting posture, if the most substantial happiness here is but like a heap of snow before the heat of the sun, like a shadow that flies away at noon-day-light. If it be but the shadow of a shadow, or less, if one would speak any thing more diminutively; how great a folly is it to set our hearts upon it? Of Christ's kingdom it is said there shall be no end; but this world is always in a flux, always lapsing, and tending towards its period.

I remember Seneca speaking of his master Attalus, that which cured him of the inordinate love of the world, was the sight of the triumphs of Rome, where there was all the magnificence, and splendour, and grandeur of the world made most conspicuous: after he had stood some hours in seeing all, saith he, 'I have seen all this pomp and magnificence put in such order, and passing slowly along, yet it is all gone; and why should I esteem and love this which is so transient and momentary? Why are we struck with wonder and amazement at this? It is but a vain pomp, and passeth away; the scripture tells us so, "the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John 2. 17.

Let me tell you further, upon this account that is so short, and an eternal state follows it, that there is no such unhappy person in the world, as he that is happy here, because of the sudden change that death shall make in him from his present pleasure to everlasting misery. This is that which will double his misery.

As I remember it is an observation of physicians, that there is nothing more destructive to health than the sudden change of the seasons, when we pass from extreme cold to extreme heat. O the sudden change from the pleasures of this world to everlasting torment, will double the misery. Remember when you live in the world, shining in pomp, and flowing in pleasures, and enjoy the greatest prosperity, and have the strongest bodies, and the firmest health, you may be struck with death suddenly; but suppose you do not die suddenly, but have the preface of a sickness before your dissolution; yet when the physician comes and speaks but a few words of some cold hope, that there is only some possibility of your recovery, it is like the sentence of death to you. But when you are ready to depart, and your soul sits trembling upon your lips, and you are ready to take your flight, you have nothing to pitch upon but heaven or hell. Now since this world is so shadowy and short an enjoyment, shall this take you off from seeking heaven? One would think it impossible that the reasonable creature should be guilty of such folly. Bring this down to yourselves, if this world is that which makes us neglect heaven, let us learn to disparage this world, by comparing it with the eternal world, that so we may seek the things that are above.

CHAP. XII.

This rest should fortify us against all the afflictions of this present life, whether they be chastisements, or persecutions.

SINCE there is a divine and blessed rest hereafter for the saints of God, it should fortify us against all those afflictions and calamities that befal us in this present world; First, against all those afflictions that befal us as chastisements from God, those which are designed for preparing us for this blessed rest, and these are most usual. And Secondly, those afflictions which we suffer for righteousness sake.

1. Those afflictions that are *chastisements* of us not for righteousness sake, but with respect to sin. There are two considerations which will render them tolerable to us: (1.) Consider they come from the love of God, though that love be displeased. Rev. 1. 17. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." O it is a dreadful state, when God doth take away his rod from a person, as one that is incorrigible! if God once say, "why should they be smitten any more, they will revolt more and more?" It is the most terrible word next to that of, "go ye cursed." But when God doth afflict in order to make us better, when he doth correct us for our good, O this sweetens the cup. When I have this argument, I am part of God's paternal care, and under his gracious providence, that he doth not leave me unchastised in sin. But which is more particularly to my purpose, because these chastisements are in order to an eternal rest, they are to purify us, and to prepare us for that rest. When he is pleased to put his people into the fire, it is to refine them, and burn up their dross; it is to make his image more bright and shining upon them, and that is the principal cause; I speak with reference to God, it is his love, though displeased that afflicts them. So then the issue of all, shall be the eternal enjoyment of God in heaven, how should this make God's people willing to bear his present displeasure, when God's rod is upon his children; it

is more powerful to convince them, for thereby he makes them sensible of the evil of sin, which only can bar their entrance into heaven; he takes their hearts off this world, which would turn them from heaven. When you are under the sharpest afflictions, you may comfort yourselves with this, that there is a blessed repose in the bosom of God, when you shall enjoy his favour without eclipse or interruption. I speak this to the people of God that labour to have his chastisements sanctified and effectual upon them. The very belief of this is able to sweeten all the afflictions that we can meet with here. It is an expression of the apostle; "rejoicing in hope." Rom. 15. 13. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

2. Especially those sufferings that are endured for righteousness sake, are not only made tolerable, but easy and amiable to us. I shall tell you that which at first you may think a paradox, but is an eternal truth; he is the happiest man in the world that suffers most for God, and receives least of his reward here: because of the degrees of glory that are reserved for such a one hereafter, which shall infinitely recompense all that he suffereth here. There are two scriptures that I shall set before you for this purpose. Rom. 8. 18. "For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." "For I reckon," as if he had said, I have made a strict search into it, I have thoroughly examined the matter, I have, upon a just computation of the future glory, found that it is incomparably above our present sufferings. Who is it that saith this? It is the most afflicted person in the world, and one that had such a sight of heaven while he was here, that he did, as it were walk by sight. As the Israelites sent spies into the land of Canaan, to give them an account of the fruitfulness of that good land; so Paul was as it were, sent from earth to heaven to discover it, and give us an account of it. "For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us." All the sufferings of this life are moderated and allayed by the sense of God's favour to his people, and they are all but for a time. Therefore you find Paul instancing in this very case, 2 Cor. 4. 17. "for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Where you see the opposition is made both in the degree and

duration of those things. All the afflictions of this world they are but *light* and *momentary;* but it is an eternal weight of glory. And will not infinite and eternal glory support us under short and light afflictions? I know many times they are very heavy to sense, and very afflictive. But then faith and hope represent to the soul, and give assurance of this eternal rest, which is a great support to the soul. The more tempestuous the sea is, the more sweet will heaven be. Therefore comfort yourselves under all your afflictions that you suffer for Christ's sake.

CHAP. XIII.

This rest affords strong consolation to the saints in their conflict with death. Death considered as it either affects nature, or is an inlet to heaven. The saints must undergo it, that the relics of sin may be extinguished; as a means to bring them to glory; because they must run the race before they have the prize; that there may be a distinction between the present and future state; that divine power may be glorified in their resurrection. A threefold temper of spirit with which a saint should die; with submission to the will of God, with joy from a consciousness of his own sincerity, and a prospect of heaven. It is very dishonourable for a saint to be unwilling to die; it argues a great defect in his faith and love, and too great a value for this world.

IF there be a blessed rest remaining for the saints in the next world, this will afford strong consolation in their conflict with death, that universal enemy of mankind. For this is now by a merciful providence of God appointed to be a means of conveying them to the possession of this rest. Therefore the saints should meet death, not only without those terrors and fears which naturally we are liable to upon that account, but with joyful affections, as the psalmist said, "I was glad when they said, let us go up to the house of the Lord." So when the com-

passionate call of God by death shall sound in the ears of a christian, that he should come up to this rest, he should receive that call with joy.

It is otherwise with wicked men; to them death is (and ought to be) the king of terrors. And in truth it is the saddest sight in the world, when one who hath lived a careless life, neglecting God and his soul: when such a one dies with the same indifference as if he was going to sleep, without any solicitousness or concernment about his future state. It is often thus, that an affected security in this life is punished with an inflicted security at death. It is often so that the sinner goes from an inward darkness to outer darkness.

On the other side it is sad to see an awakened and terrified sinner die; when one that hath lived in a course of sin, and God by the cold hands of death attacks, and seizes upon him to bring him to judgment; and conscience begins to take courage, and speak to the sinner, and tell him what his state is; and his fear presently turns into despair. This is a most dreadful sight, to see a man that hath lived as if he should never die, to die without any hope of living in another world.

But to see one that hath been a sincere servant of God, one that hath lived a life of holiness, to see this person joyful upon a death bed: when the fainting flesh sinks under the weight of a disease, to see the soul supported and raised with the blessed hopes of heaven, it is certainly the most comfortable sight in the world. Nothing is so honourable to religion; nothing so encouraging and consolatory to those that are round about such a person; nothing so much discovers the power of godliness as to see a servant of God not only die in peace, but to die in triumph. As I remember Bernard tells us of his brother, I was called (saith he) to see a miracle, to see a man triumphing in death, and over death. O this is that which makes religion to be so valuable. This is that which is the way to convert sinners indeed.

To improve this part of the application, I will, First, show how we are to consider death; Secondly, upon what account this dispensation is continued to the saints, that they cannot obtain heaven but by dying; Thirdly, with what frame and temper of mind it becomes them to receive death; Fourthly, how dis-

honourable a thing it is for the people of God to be unwilling to die.

1. Show how we are to consider death. Death may be considered two ways (1.) as it affects nature, as it dissolves the vital intimate union between soul and body, and separates those near and dear friends; so it hath an aspect that is unpleasing to us. Considered thus in itself, death is so far from being an object of ones desire, that our blessed Saviour who was a person holy, harmless, undefiled, who never had an irregular passion, yet when he drew near to death, he prayed, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." There was an aversion to death in the human soul of Christ. You must understand it thus: his death was attended with all those circumstances, that made it truly formidable. Take an instance in one of the holiest persons that ever was in the world, and that is Paul, 2 Cor. 5. 4. after he had expressed his desire to be in heaven, "for in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." In the fourth verse he tells us, "for we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burthened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." If it were possible, and if it were matter of a lawful wish, a saint would not desire to be unclothed, but have this body of flesh changed into an immortal body. But if heaven be obtained by dying, if God will take off this vile garment of flesh, that he may put the royal robe upon us, we must be willing to be unclothed.

(2.) Consider death as a means to bring us to everlasting blessedness: so it is the proper object of our desire. Phil. 1. 23. "Having a *desire* to depart and be with Christ which is far better; yet nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." I desire to depart, as my being present in the body, implies being absent from the Lord. So the apostle desired to be divested of this body that he might see Christ face to face. Though all the saints of God have not such wings of fire as the apostle had, such ardent affections to be with Christ, yet where there is a renewed nature, there will be a tendency and an inclination towards it, that so they may be with God and Christ which is far better, and in this respect the nature of death is changed to the people of God. It is an enemy to nature; but

considered by this merciful order of the divine providence, as it is a means to bring us to heaven, so it is reconciled to us. Prov. 14. "If a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him." So if your ways please him, he will make death, your last enemy to be a friend to you; and it will be the best and most blessed friend to remove us from this sinful world to the enjoyment of the most holy and blessed God. 1 Cor. 3. 22, 23. "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." Where you have the scale of subordination the gospel makes; Christ is God's, and you are Christ's, and all things are yours.

There is such an intimate union between God and Christ, and Christ and believers, that all is theirs, whether life or death; death is for their advantage: Phil. 1. 21. "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;" but to a carnal man, death is the greatest loss, he loseth all his good things in this world, and his hopes of all good in the next. He loseth whatsoever he values here, and what is valuable in the next life. Death is to a carnal man a fiery stinging serpent, it wounds him and delivers him to eternal death. But to a saint death is an advantage, it brings him to the enjoyment of God, and the blessed spirits above. And further there is an expression, that is most remarkable to this purpose, to show that the nature of death is changed to a believer, that which in itself is the doom of the law and curse and punishment of sin, yet the death of a saint is of most precious account in God's sight; Psal. 116. 15. "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." God never looks upon his people with a more tender compassionate eye, than in a dying hour: suppose their death be attended with all the circumstances of ignominy and scorn, and contumely in the world, it is most precious to him.

Now if it be said, if this be necessary in order to the making of death desirable to us, what is the reason that God doth by dying bring the saints to heaven? he could if he pleased, change all, as those that shall be found alive at the coming of Christ at the last; God could, if he pleased change them by his infinite power, and give them a blessed immortality instead of death. This leads me to remark,

2. What is the reason of this dispensation, why death is continued to the saints? For these reasons.

(1.) God is pleased to continue death in the world to saints and believers, because by this he would extinguish all the relics of sin; which are principally seated in the carnal and sensitive faculties. Death is a mark of God's displeasure against sin, and he continues it so to be to the end of the world to all his people, that he may make death instrumental to abolish sin, that so no root or fibre of it shall remain. It is true, God could abolish it by his infinite power immediately; but he doth it this way to declare what an evil thing sin is. As soon as the soul is separated from the body it is presently freed from all the taint and defilement of sin (I speak now of the saints.) The body indeed falls to the grave, and God will at last recompose that in honour and glory, and in a state of perfect purity. But this way he hath chosen to extinguish the relics of sin by death. Suppose that a piece of plate be battered and soiled extremely, so that neither the fashion nor the lustre of it remains, a goldsmith will melt this down and put it into a new figure and form. Thus it is with the body of a saint, it is like a piece of plate soiled and battered by sin, and God melts it down in order to its being refined and made meet for a glorious state.

(2.) Death is a means to bring us to glory; it is the way that our Saviour went in before us; he ascended into heaven by the grave, and is an example of our glorification; "our vile body shall be changed by Christ," that it may be "fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself." Phil. 3. 21. We must be the food of worms, and lie in that place which is called the land of forgetfulness. When our Redeemer ascended into heaven, he took the grave in his way; and he hath perfumed the grave, and made it a bed of rest to his people.

(3.) Another reason why death is continued to the saints, is, because this is the order of the divine wisdom in the gospel, that none should receive the prize but those that run the race. Therefore till we have run that race that is set before us by our dying, which is the accomplishment of it, we have not a right to the crown. "None are crowned," saith the apostle, "but those that strive lawfully;" and in our encountering death, the last enemy, we declare our love to God: for "whether we live or die, we are

the Lord's." And till we overcome death we are not qualified for the crown of righteousness, life, and glory: therefore God dispenseth his reward after we have persevered in his service. For he hath chose this way to give heaven to us. Although it is a most free favour and gift of his love, and the richest liberality of his hand; yet it is after we have glorified him by perseverance, and that dying as well as living.

(4.) God continues this dispensation to the saints that they shall come to heaven by death; that he may distinguish between the present state and the future. If every saint and holy man should be glorified after such a term of years and ascend to heaven as our Saviour did, we should not then walk by faith, but by sight; and so there would be no distinction between this and the next state. It is ordered by God in the gospel, that we should live by faith. God is therefore pleased to reserve that glory for the saints in the other world, and they must pass to it by dying. He will try their faith, and exercise their reason too, whether they will believe him upon his promise.

(5.) Another reason why God continues death to the saints in all ages is for the greater glorification of his power in raising their dead bodies at the last day; when all that have lain in their repositories for so many ages; all the saints whose bodies have been resolved into their elements, and scattered abroad, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, shall all be re-animated and reunited to their souls, and made possessors of God for ever. The resurrection of the body is a miracle almost equal to the creation; for it is the raising a glorious body out of matter most unprepared and indisposed. The apostle tells us, our Saviour shall come to be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," 2 Thes. 1. 10. the angels themselves will then be struck with a noble wonder, to see springing out of the dust innumerable glorified bodies. So when the apostle speaks concerning the resurrection of the just, Phil. 3. 21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of his mighty power, whereby he his able even to subdue all things to himself." With what an emphasis doth he speak of the divine power that shall raise our bodies? Thus I have opened to you the reasons why God is pleased by dying to bring his saints to their everlasting rest.

3. Let us now see with what temper and frame of spirit it be-

comes the people of God to leave this world. There are three things to which I shall advert.

(1.) That which is the lowest degree of grace is this, a saint should die with *submission to the will of God*, with an acquiescence in the will of his Father. There may be some stormy affections in our nature, considering death as a natural evil; yet nevertheless, when we consider it is God that gave life and it is God that takes away life, our death should be with resignation and yielding up ourselves to God. Observe that most passionate story concerning Abraham's offering up Isaac. He was commanded to sacrifice his son. Consider what a hard work it was for Abraham to offer up his son, and for his son to be offered up. Yet we do not read of the least reluctancy either in Abraham or Isaac; for there was a superior consideration both in the one and in the other, that silenced all the motions of nature. Abraham complies with God, and Isaac readily yields up himself to be sacrificed by his father. When God signifies his will to us, that we must die, whatever are the next causes of it, they are but instrumental to his providence, and therefore it becomes us, with the greatest willingness, to resign up ourselves to God. Indeed when a wicked man dies, his soul is often rent from him by an act of violence and force. O how unwillingly doth he go! for what is the hope of the hypocrite, when God shall take away his soul; that is, take it away by storm. But a gracious person should deliver up his soul to God. "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." How voluntarily doth he commend and resign up his soul to God! if you should say it is true, I am willing to yield up my soul to God, but I am afraid to die: many of the most holy servants of God are most sensible, even in a sorrowful manner, of their appearance before the great tribunal, and the account they are to give to the Father of spirits; and this makes them unwilling to die. To that I shall only say thus much; it is a very sad case, though the soul is safe as to its eternal interest, if there be an uncomfortable apprehension of our being in danger, yet even then it is the duty of the creature to submit. This is a duty that must never be violated. You may pray indeed with earnestness, as David, "O spare me a little that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more."

Psal. 39. 13. And this is becoming the servants of God. But if God by his providence show it his will they should die, submission to his decreeing providence is entirely their duty; and this is the lowest step that we can go.

(2.) To ascend higher; it becomes a saint to receive death not only patiently, but joyfully, as it is that which shall bring him to the sight of God, to the perfect love of God, to the enjoyment of the blessed society above: I say *a saint should receive death joyfully*. It is that which is the end of his faith, and of his hope; and that which if he be a true saint, hath been the supreme object of his desire, for in truth, no man can pray in sincerity, "thy will be done and thy kingdom come," but in that very petition, he desires God to fit him for heaven, and to take him to it. Therefore he should receive death joyfully when ever it comes. We read in the 42 psalm, a very passionate expression of David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before thee?" He was then banished from the tabernacle. How much greater reason have we to say, O when shall I appear before God in his temple above, and see his unveiled glory, and love him as much as I am capable of loving? O consider when the body dies, the soul is not oppressed in its ruins, but is delivered by it. The soul hath an immediate entrance into glory, and a full possession of the kingdom prepared for it. And O the joyful reception that the holy soul hath when it comes to heaven. Therefore with what joy should it go thither: it is welcomed by its God and Jesus Christ, the fruition of whom is its blessedness for ever. Christ will pronounce the blessed sentence and say, "Well done good and faithful servant enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," O what an ecstacy will a holy soul be in when it hears those life-breathing words from the mouth of Christ! All the angels and saints above, have, as it were, an overflowing joy, when the people of God are brought safe to the everlasting kingdom. You know when there is a great fleet of ships, that are all designed for one harbour and port, some come in before the other into the harbour; how do they welcome the rest that come after! What expressions of joy, what caressing and feasting between friends, when they are safely arrived in the same harbour! This is a little emblem of the joy that is above. With what triumphant joy do the saints welcome one another after they are passed through these dangerous seas,

the troubles and temptations of this wicked world, and are arrived safe to the bosom of God. But you will say there are many of the people of God, that do not feel this joy when they come to die. I answer it is their own fault. They do not only lose a privilege, but they neglect a duty. It may be, that they have not lived with that holy care, and circumspection, and accuracy as becomes those that made it their business to finish their course with joy. Yet nevertheless the saints of God, where there is true grace, though they may experience fears, and doubts, and troubles, yet their happiness is secured. It is with them as it is many times with a setting sun, that is obscured with thick vapours; but it ariseth in the morning in a beautiful horizon. So many a saint may set in a cloud, and be afraid of appearing before God; but when they come into the other world, they are received with joy and triumph. We should labour so to live, that we may die joyfully. There are two things which are causes of joy to the dying saints.

1st, A reflection upon a life sincerely spent in the service of God, though attended with infirmities and failings. For thus saith the apostle, 2 Cor. 1. 22. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world." The reflection upon a life that hath been pleasing to God in the main course of it, and a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, O it makes death desirable, it makes a man joyful in death. And this joyful reflection upon our past works, is an imitation of God. For when God looked back upon his works of creation, and saw that they were all very good, he rejoiced in them, he delighted in the review of them; then he appointed a sabbath, and a day of rest, so when a christian looks back upon a life regulated by the gospel according to that acceptance that God declareth there; O the peace and joy that is in the soul!

2dly, Another cause of a christian's joy in death, is the prospect of eternal blessedness that is before him: it was the saying of a holy man in a dying hour, there is no man can overcome death, but he that looks beyond death. Now a christian by faith looks through the dark cloud; he sees that when the natural life shall be extinguished, the spiritual life shall come to its perfection. This prospect makes the saints joyful. I read of the fa-

mous astronomer Hipparchus, one speaks in praise and admiration of him; O the divine wisdom of Hipparchus, he freed the world from a double darkness and inconvenience, of ignorance and fear, when he discovered the causes of the eclipses. For the people thought that they should lose the sun and moon when there was an eclipse of them. Thus death is an eclipse; it eclipseth this natural life for a time: but he that hath an enlightened faith and hope of an eternal rest, knows a better life shall be restored to the body, and the soul shall enter immediately into the possession of eternal life. Therefore although the body of a saint may sigh and groan for the pangs and agonies it endures in a dying hour, yet he can rejoice and lift up his head, because the day of his redemption draws nigh.

(3.) It becomes a saint not only to die joyfully, but thankfully, with solemn praises to God that he will be pleased to take him to himself. "Father I will, saith Christ, that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." This may make a saint to die triumphantly, considering that divine grace hath made him persevere to the end. For perseverance is that which qualifies him for heaven, and entitles him to it by the promise, "Those that patiently continue in well-doing, shall have honour, glory, immortality, and eternal life." O with what thankfulness should a saint of God leave the world, seeing God hath pleased to fortify his spirit against all those temptations that have ruined so many souls, and to keep his love alive acting and governing in the breast of a saint, and that he is pleased to take him immediately to himself. A saint should die with hymns of praise in his mouth, and begin his heaven here. It is observed, that when great rivers near the sea break forth and overflow the banks, the sea meets them and mixeth with them: so when a saint ascends to heaven, many times it descends to him and refresheth him in his dying agonies. A dying saint should begin the work of praise here, that shall be his employment and blessedness for ever. We are never more indebted to God, than when we come to die. When he hath carried us through a sinful tempting world, and hath conveyed us safe to eternal felicity.

Thus I have shown you how it becomes a saint of God to die. O that you would labour so to die, for it will be your unspeakable advantage. I am sure you will be of my mind then, unless

you are under a fatal stupidity, and a damnable delusion. You will wish you had prepared yourselves to die comfortably. O that we could despise all the terrors and allurements of this world, that we may die a happy death!

4. I shall show you how dishonourable a thing it is for the people of God to be unwilling to die; how it doth reflect upon them and argues that which should be matter of continual sorrow and grief.

(1.) It argues a strange *defect in his faith.* We have a double apprehension of death, the apprehension of nature, and the apprehension of faith. Indeed in the apprehension of nature, there is nothing to sweeten it, considering it in itself. He that looks upon a dying or dead person merely with a carnal eye, will see matter enough of dread; to behold a body labouring under agonies, and either painful or languishing distempers; to see it, as we read of the possessed person in the gospel, sometimes cast into the fire, and sometimes into the water; sometimes it may be in a burning fever, and sometimes in a cold sweat; here is nothing to make it desirable. To see a dead body, pale, cold and stiff, without motion or life, this is still matter of terror. But if you look upon it with the apprehension of faith, it gives you another prospect of it. For death is that which is ordained by the Father of mercies, to put us into a state beyond dying. In the apprehension of faith, death is so far from wanting consolation, that it is the greatest consolation in the world to a believer, because faith tells him that after death we shall sin no more; weep no more; and be above all afflicting evils. Faith assures a believer that his soul shall immediately enter upon a blessed immortality as soon as he leaves the body. It shall be transported by a guard of angels, those immortal warriors, through the devil's kingdom, safely to eternal rest. And for the body that indeed falls to the dust; but faith assures me, that this shall be transformed and made like unto Christ's glorious body, and shall be re-united to the soul, and be its consort in everlasting happiness.

We read in the book of Leviticus, concerning the house that was infected with the fretting leprosy, God ordered that it should be pulled to pieces and demolished: and we read of the order of God concerning the tabernacle, that it should be taken down when it was to be removed. Now the death of the wicked man,

and the saint may be compared to these two, as to the difference of them. When a wicked man dies, his body is like the house infected with the leprosy, all the parts of it, after being pulled down are thrown into ruins and rubbish with execration. But when a saint dies, his body is taken down as the tabernacle was, with a great deal of care, to be preserved till it be raised a glorious temple, for the Spirit to dwell in for ever. Now since faith giveth us an assurance of these things what a dishonour is it to a christian, that he should be unwilling to die. We read of the disciples, that when our Lord came unto them upon the waters, they said it is a spectre, it is a spirit: they could not bear the apparition: but our Saviour said unto them, "Be not afraid it is I;" It is I that am your merciful Saviour. A strange thing that we should be afraid of death! It is Christ that comes by death to take us to himself. The reason why a saint dies, is this, because Christ will have those souls, which cost him so dear, to reign with him in glory above, that he may obtain his purchased possession. Do but then consider with yourselves, how dishonourable it is to a christian, one that hath made it his business and work to glorify and please God; what a shame it is to be unwilling to die! It argues as if there were some relics of infidelity in him too powerful for his faith. Is it not a shame to a christian to read what is reported concerning a philosopher among the heathens, when Antigonus the emperor threatened to put the philosopher to death; threaten this, said he, to your insolent courtiers, that are softened with sensuality, for I am prepared for death. Is it not a shame to a christian that he should not be above the fear of death, when a heathen philosopher speaks thus with courage and bravery, unmoved at the threatenings of it? What a shame it is for a christian to be afraid of death, when God hath given him assurance, that there is eternal rest above.

(2.) It argues the *coldness of our love to God and Christ.* Love is an affection of union; it is that which is always aspiring and acting in desire, after the full fruition of the person beloved. And if there be the least degree of holy love in the soul, it is that which causeth it to ascend in its desires towards God, to be with him. You know as soon as the fire is kindled, the sparks will be ascending, and the flame arising; so where there is a sincere love to God and Christ, it is always in a tendency and incli-

nation towards him. Therefore in the New Testament you have this as the universal common character of christians, they are those that, "Love the appearance of Christ." This is their character. And pray do but consider how this coldness of our love that I am now speaking of, is aggravated upon one account: our Saviour had such a love for us, that he left the bosom of his Father, the throne of his glory, and *descended* into this lower state of misery for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity, and recover us from our lost and undone condition. And shall not our love make us willing to *ascend* to him where we enjoy him in glory? When the soul is divorced from the body it is immediately united to Christ, married to him for ever? Shall we not be willing to leave this world, that we may be united to him that loveth us? How can we pretend to the love of Christ, and not have this inseparable effect of it, earnest desires to be with him? Certainly this consideration should make us ashamed, that we live so patiently in this world, that we are not always under earnest longings and languishings to be with Christ above, that he may "Kiss us with the kisses of his mouth, whose love is better than wine;" and that we may enjoy his love which is infinitely sweeter than all the festival entertainments of this world. Did the love of Christ make him willing to come from heaven to earth to *suffer* for us; and shall not our love make us willing to ascend to heaven to *reign* with him? I know what I am now speaking, does no more affect a carnal heart, than if I were offering him a stone for food. But I speak to those that have this holy fire in their breasts, and that sincerely love Christ. Methinks it should make us ashamed, to be indifferent whether we continue still in the world, or go to heaven.

(3.) It argues too great an attachment to the world; and how dishonourable is this to the christian. As if his heart were glued to these things; as if they were his chief happiness! I do not wonder if I see a carnal man that is rich and lives in pleasure, if *he* be unwilling to die. What our Saviour tells of the young man in the gospel, is true of such, "He went away sorrowful from Christ, for he had great possessions." For such a man to leave the world sorrowful, that hath his heart here, and his happiness here, I do not wonder at it. It is a bad exchange that such a one makes. But for *the man* that hath a *title to an eternal kingdom*, to be unwilling to die and leave this world,

surely argues a great degree of carnality in his breast, that he should be so taken with these trifles of time, these empty vanities, and that he should be so unwilling to go to that place, where there is the only true treasure, and the only true pleasure and delight, and perfect satisfaction!

Consider how very dishonourable it is for a christian to be unwilling to die, therefore let us labour constantly to conquer this aversion to death, this fear of it; the truth of it is, there is no excuse that a holy man can bring for his unwillingness to die; but indeed the very excuse increases the fault. If you say you are not yet prepared to die, therefore you fear death; it is your own fault that you are not every day prepared, seeing there is a strict and peremptory command of Christ to partake of the symbolical representation of his sufferings, if you neglect to come, and say, you are not prepared; why are you not? It is a guilty neglect of your souls that you are not prepared for this blessed ordinance. It is not your pretence of unpreparedness will free you, if you neglect and disobey this charge and command of your heavenly Father. So if you are unwilling to die and unprepared it is your fault that you are not ready for death. All those that are united to Christ and have an interest in him, and have mortified their lusts, O let them not be unwilling to die. Indeed many of those that walk holily and humbly, and are conscientious christians, are many times afraid to die; I do not deny this. Sometimes it is with them in reference to the fears of death, as it is with one that hath wasps humming about him that have lost their sting; they may terrify him but cannot hurt him. Death to a saint is like a wasp that hath lost its sting, it may make a humming noise about him, it may raise trouble and fear in him for a time, but cannot really hurt him. Now to such I shall only say this; where there is a sincere humble soul, that hath made it its business to please God, although many infirmities and many sins have attended his performances (which the best saints are guilty of) nevertheless do but consider, what the gospel saith concerning our Saviour, it tells you he is your Judge; he that valued you so much as to give his life for you; he is your Judge; your Advocate is to pass sentence; and shall we not be willing to appear before him that is our Saviour? Shall not the ransomed with joy give up themselves to their Redeemer?

It is a terrible consideration to appear before an infinite God,

but this is a comfortable consideration, that his goodness is answerable to his greatness. That I may allude to that scripture, that respects the saints coming to the throne of grace, saith the apostle, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace," Heb. 4. 19. So I may say, let a saint go boldly to a throne of glory; with boldness, calmness, and joy let the saints deliver their souls up to Christ!

CHAP XIV

This affords comfort in the death of holy friends.

THE next use of the point is this; if there be an eternal rest remaining for the people of God, then this affords us *solid comfort in the death of our dearest friends who die in the Lord*, and who are ascended to enjoy this rest. It is one of the tenderest trials in the world, when God takes from us our dear relations and beloved friends. There is nothing more affects humanity, nothing more wounding, than when those we value, love, and esteem, and delight in are taken from us. Now the apostle gives this direction, 1 Thes. 4. 13. "But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you sorrow not even as others which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Indeed for the heathen, that looks upon death as a gulph that swallows a man for ever, there might be sorrow to part with their dearest relatives; but for the saints that believe an eternal state, and have a well-grounded hope that those that are near them, either in consanguinity or affection, are removed from this land of darkness to the inheritance of the saints in light; they should not be dejected, nor overwhelmed with sorrow.

A dying believer should speak to his friends, as Christ did to his disciples, "If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I am going to my heavenly Father." They are going to a place where they shall never be in danger of losing God, or their souls. We should refresh ourselves with consideration: though our departed friends are dead to us, they are alive to God in their better part; they are now infinitely and eternally happy. I shall apply by way of illustration for this part of the argument, that which we read concerning Jacob and Joseph; Jacob, you know, was overwhelmed with sorrow at the apprehension of Joseph's death; when he saw Joseph's garment torn and covered with blood, Gen. 37. 33. he said, "It is my son's coat, an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph without doubt is rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sack-cloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days." He thought a wild beast had devoured him, when at the same time, Joseph, the beloved son of his father, was seated next to the throne of Pharaoh in the rich kingdom of Egypt, and made governor of the land. We are wounded many times by the apprehension that our deceased friends are torn in pieces by death, this fills the channel always with new sorrow, when we reflect upon it. But remember, if they were saints they are reigning in a better kingdom than that of this world. Your holy friends, you mourn for them as if they were torn in pieces by death, when they are reigning at God's right hand; "In whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand, there are pleasures for evermore." Therefore dry up this current of tears that you shed for the departed servants of God.

CHAP. XV.

Exhortation to prepare for this rest. General rules for it; to purify ourselves more and more, and perfect holiness in the fear of God; whereby our title will be clearer, and our assurance more joyful. Special rules, to fix our choice on this eternal rest as our portion; frequently and seriously think upon it; keep up earnest desires after it, and a lively hope of it; and strictly observe the Lord's Day.

BY the way of *exhortation* to you all, *to prepare for this eternal rest.* It is at a distance from us, though the distance be but small from many of us. And there is a great deal of difficulty attending it; but the excellency and the glory of it is that which will justify our greatest pains and diligence in labouring for it. It is our Saviour's counsel, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you," Mat. 6. 33. Therefore seek it first. As we read the first part of God's creation was a heaven, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." An empyreal heaven, the heaven of heavens was the first part of God's creation. And as it was the first part of God's work, so let it be the first part of our work to obtain a title to it, and be qualified for it. Thus saith the apostle Paul, Phil. 3. 13, 14. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "I press towards the mark;" what vehement contention and earnestness do these words signify? So the apostle, 1 Tim. 6. 19. "Charge those that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all thing to enjoy, and that they do good, and be rich in good works, &c. laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." And our Saviour tells us, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." All these

scriptures I adduce to show you, with what vigour, and diligence, and zeal, you should labour for an eternal rest.

Now in the management of this,

I. I shall lay down some general rules how you should prepare for an eternal rest.

II. Then some special rules for the government and conduct of yourselves for the obtaining of it.

1. The first general rule is this in order to your preparation for this eternal rest: let it be your constant care to purify yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. 7. 1. saith the apostle, "Having therefore these promises; dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." What is that promise? It is this in the 18th verse of the last chapter, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." O cleanse yourselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit. Under the law no person was permitted to enter into the tabernacle but those that were legally cleansed. He that should go to sacrifice with his legal uncleanness died for it. O consider what is that legal uncleanness to the uncleanness of sin? What is the touching of a dead body? What is this? It hath no guilt in itself, no moral turpitude in it. God for wise reasons enjoined it, and expected obedience to it, that a man that was thus typically unclean should not enter into the tabernacle. But O consider, one that hath the uncleanness of sin shall not enter into the temple above, he must be purified. Thus saith the psalmist, "I will wash my hands in innocency, and compass thine altar, O Lord." He speaks of the material altar; how much more should we be pure, holy, and undefiled, if we enter into the tabernacle above? We read in the book of Esther, 2 chap. 12. "Of the virgins that were prepared twelve months for king Ahasuerus." The time that we are in this world is but as it were the months of our purification for the cleansing us from sin, that we may be fit for heaven. Let it be your constant serious work to be cleansing yourselves, and purifying your hearts, Jam. 4. 8. saith the apostle, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." If you would have God draw near to you, and if you would draw near to God, you must cleanse your hands, and purify your hearts; you must not

only be free from sins of a crimson guilt, that natural conscience will take fire at; but you must be cleansed from all inward affection to sin, if you will appear before God here; much more if you will appear before him above: 1 John 3. 3. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." There cannot be a rational hope of heaven without purification: because the promise that doth secure heaven to the saints, hath always this condition with it, only those that are holy shall see God. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." There cannot be a well-grounded hope of heaven without purification. And because every day we are so apt to contract defilement, let us purify and cleanse ourselves every day by the application of the blood of Christ, and watch over ourselves, that not so much as a vain thought, or an irregular action be allowed by us. We must be always cleansing ourselves, John 13. 4. it is said, "Our Saviour arose from supper and laid aside his garment, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poured water into a bason, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter, and Peter said unto him, thou shalt never wash my feet; Jesus answered him, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head: Jesus saith unto him, he that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." These words are an allusion to the fashion of the country where they walked in sandals, and their feet were apt to contract soil; and when they came to any house this was part of their entertainment to wash their feet. The moral is this, he that is sanctified by the Spirit of God and purified, needs not such a change as one that is unconverted, but every day he contracts defilement, and therefore needs to wash himself every day with the blood of Christ. We should use a strict care and regard to ourselves, for we contract defilement every day while we are in this world: that part of holiness called mortification is to be carried on continually, lest sins and lusts cleave to us. We should never cease carrying on this blessed work till it come to perfection, because it is a necessary preparation to our living with God above. There is no unclean thing shall ever enter into the New Jerusalem. We must therefore

so labour to live, that when we come to die, "We may be found of God in peace, without spot, and blameless," without the least rebellious affection against him. This is that which will make death comfortable, and will cause us to triumph over it with the blessed apostle, 1 Cor. 15. 55. "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." If sin be pardoned and mortified, death hath lost its sting. Therefore I beseech you, let this be your constant work, to be purifying yourselves from all hypocrisy and all carnality, and all kinds and degrees of sin, and to attain to an unspotted holiness here.

2. To cleansing from sin, add the positive duty of perfecting holiness in the fear of God: every day be aspiring after a complete conformity to God, and obedience to him, and to his holy will. This is always in conjunction with the former. The crucifying of the body of sin, and the quickening and vigour of the new man are inseparable. For sin is crucified by the power of grace, and by the vigorous actings of it. So that we must labour that every grace (so far as is possible for us) may receive its consummate degree here; not only that it be in us in truth, but in a degree of eminency, and to exercise those graces for the glory of God. The holy apostle doth make this inference that I am now speaking of, when he had been speaking of the glory of the resurrection, 1 Cor. 15. ult. "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know your labour is not in vain in the Lord." This abounding in the work of the Lord is according to the sphere and compass wherein we are placed. We must always be diligent, active and zealous in the service of God; we must neither abuse our talents, nor neglect them, but be always improving them for the glory of God, and the good of our own souls, and the souls of others; and this, that we may be the more prepared for the eternal rest. And I would have you consider, that there is not the meanest christian, that is of the lowest rank, and of the smallest account in the world, but may abound in the work of the Lord according to these circumstances, and that place wherein he is, and may glorify God eminently. I remember it is the exhortation of the apostle, and it is worthy your notice, speaking concerning servants, 2 Tim. 9. 10. "Exhort servants to be obe-

dient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering them again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Servants then were slaves, in the lowest degree of bondage, comparatively to what our servants are; yet they might by their good fidelity adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; they might glorify God eminently in their low estate, and so prepare themselves for this heavenly rest. I may illustrate this by an instance or two. Suppose a statuary, one that is an excellent sculptor, be employed to carve a statue, whatsoever the materials be, he may use as much skill in carving upon an ordinary stone as upon the finest marble. So whatsoever thy condition is in the world, thou mayest glorify God in it, and bring praise to his name, and show as excellent graces as he that sits on the throne. For our glorifying of God hath respect to that place wherein we are set, it is with respect to those circumstances wherein we are. As our Saviour speaks concerning the poor widow that cast her "two mites" into the treasury, she gave more than those that threw in their costly gifts, yea, though they had cast in a talent; for she threw in and gave all that she had. It was esteemed more because of her zealous affection. Thus we may glorify God in a low estate. To give you another illustration. There are fruit trees of several kinds, and some fruits are more valuable than others; that tree that brings forth abundance of fruit according to its kind, is a valuable tree. As that which is laden with apples, though there be other trees which bring a more excellent fruit, yet this is an excellent tree in its kind. So a christian that doth adorn that place wherein God hath set him, brings honour to God by diligence in his place, and prepares himself for the heavenly glory. There are two things that are proper for us to consider with respect to excelling in grace. 1. Hereby we shall make our title to heaven more clear, have a more joyful assurance of it. For let me tell you, a great light discovers itself to a weak eye. Where grace is in its radiancy and lustre, it discovers itself to the soul. Whereas many holy saints of God, who have the truth of grace, yet because it is in them so strong and powerful, have not the comfort of it. If you abound in grace, you shall have an abundant entrance into God's heavenly kingdom. One that hath true grace, his title to heaven is safe and certain, but not so

comfortable as one that hath higher degrees of grace. Let me apply one expression of scripture to this purpose, Ephes. 1. 12. "That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ; in whom also that after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Suppose a man contract a bargain with you, and give a small earnest, except you be assured of his fidelity, you will be apt to fear he may leave it and lose his earnest, but if he give you a great earnest, he is kept from breaking his covenant and agreement with you. If God give you his Spirit, it is an inviolable earnest that you shall come to glory; for God will not lose the earnest of his sanctifying Spirit in the least degree. But the more the Spirit appears in its holy operations in the soul, we have a richer earnest, and a more blessed confirmation that we shall come to heaven. Therefore this labouring to excel in holiness, and aspiring and endeavouring to be eminent according to our places, gives us the most comfortable hope that we shall be for ever with God in heaven.

Let me give you one instance of this, and compare it with an instance in the Old Testament: we read of the apostle Paul, who always had a triumphing evidence of his being saved, he challenges heaven and earth, Rom. 8. 38. "For I am persuaded, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" and in another place he tells us, "I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day;" and when he comes to be sacrificed, he saith, 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Do you think this was the exclusive privilege of Paul as an apostle? No, for he takes in all believers as sharing with him in this privilege. The Spirit of God to a believer, doth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God; and this he doth by an illustration of those graces, which constitute him to be a son of God. We read that the apostle had a triumphant joy

in the fruit of his admirable holiness and fidelity to God; saith he, "I know nothing by myself;" he neglected no part of his ministerial work, that he might thereby honour God; and from thence did spring that blessed hope that he should be with God in heaven for ever. Compare this instance of Paul with that of David, who was an inspired prophet, a man after God's own heart, a man of extraordinary revelations; but walking carelessly, he fell into presumptuous sins; O what depth of horror and perplexity was he sometimes in? "My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head, and mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burthen, they are too heavy for me; I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long." Psal. 38. 4, 6. And how doth he earnestly beg of God to restore the spirit of joy to him, Psal. 51. 11, 12. "cast me not away from thy presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." So that a prophet, if he neglect to glorify God, may fall under such unquiet fears as may render his life a kind of death to him. A saint should labour to be always (as the apostle Paul was) aspiring after the perfection of holiness. Phil. 3. 14.

3. Let us glorify God abundantly in our several places; for then we shall have a more ample rich reward, and the greater degree of glory above. There are some thrones in heaven which are higher than others, and brighter crowns, and more excellent degrees of glory; therefore "he that sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he that sows liberally, shall reap liberally." He that is abundant in the work of the Lord, the blessed rewarder will proportionably reward him in the future state.

II. I shall now proceed to the special rules.

1. Fix your choice upon this eternal rest as your portion. As we read of Moses, when he was to depart from the children of Israel, this was his last and most affectionate counsel to them, Deut. 30. 19. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." So I say, choose this eternal rest as your supreme good and happiness, without which you are undone for ever, and without which you had better never have been born, or been in the lower rank of creatures. But you will be ready to think,

that there are none but what will choose it. But pray consider what a choice it must be; it must be with all those conditions, and with all those difficulties, that attend this state, and are annexed to it. It is not choosing heaven and happiness abstractly, and only to have a desire to enjoy this blessed state, and to say, I will take this for my happiness; unless you consider the terms and conditions of it; now in short the terms are these: you must despise all things in comparison of it: you must suffer all things that are evil in the world, all that flesh and blood calls evil, if God by his providence call you to it, that you may attain it: and for the good things of the world, take life and all the endearments of it, and all the ornaments of life, riches, honours, pleasures, friends, and relations, these must be all hated, comparatively, when eternal life comes in competition with them; for our Saviour tells us, Luke 14. 26. "if any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." It is true, it is not meant as if God commanded an absolute hatred of them; but there must be such a love and choice of heaven above these things, that whenever they come in competition, you must reject them as if you hated them: although there is a regular love to them allowed, it is but in subordination to Christ, who is the supreme object of our affections. The stars are in the heavens in the day as well as in the night; but their light is suspended when the sun appears, they have no light as to our perception: so God allows us to have a natural love to our father, mother, &c. yet whenever they come in competition, all these affections must be suspended. You must love Christ and heaven above them all; though you must still retain a love to those comforts and mercies that God hath given unto you; yet you must hate and despise all in comparison of Christ; and as the apostle saith, "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Whatsoever may be objected to you to divert you from following Christ and pursuing heaven, you must in the resolution and habit of your souls despise it, and prefer Christ and heaven before it. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2. 10. Be faithful in that covenant which God hath made with you in the gospel, whatsoever befal you; though it be the loss of life itself you must be willing to submit to it, that you may obtain heaven.

When there is such a choice of heaven, it will have a blessed command and influence upon our whole lives. Now for your comfort consider these words of Christ, Luke 10. 42. "but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her." O if your choice of heaven be sincere, firm, and constant, heaven shall never be taken from you; if all the powers of darkness, and wicked men conspire together, they cannot take from you eternal life; they may take away your temporal life; but this shall bring you to that life that is eternal.

2. Exercise your thoughts frequently and seriously upon this eternal rest. The apostle you shall find, 2 Cor. 4. 18. declares what it was that gave him courage; "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." While we are here in this lower world, and our souls confined to flesh, we are not able to conceive of heaven, according to its excellency and glory; we are not able to form proper conceptions of it, such as are answerable to its greatness and worth. But God hath been pleased to make such a discovery of heaven to us in the world, and in such fit and effective representations, that we may exercise our thoughts comfortably upon it. When Moses came from conversing with God on the mount, there was such a lustre on his face as dazzled the eyes of the Israelites; they were not able to see the face of heaven upon the earth, they could not bear it, and though he put on a veil, that they knew it was Moses. So the admiring amazing beauty of heaven we cannot see it unveiled; God hath therefore thrown a veil over it, and he hath through that veil discovered so much of the glory of heaven, that we know it is the most glorious state and the supreme happiness of the soul. Therefore we should entertain our souls with such representatives of heaven, as what the scripture makes, to set forth the joys of it. The scripture saith, "it is an eternal feast." It is said, we shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God." It is an allusion to the manner of their entertainments. You know a feast is made for love and joy, and friendship. So this is an eternal feast, the souls of the blessed are always delighting themselves in God and one another. And then again, to represent the glory of heaven, the scripture

expresseth it to you under the notion of a kingdom, which is the highest degree of earthly glory; and it is called an everlasting kingdom, and a crown of life; and all this to show us that it is the highest dignity that the reasonable nature is capable of. Then to show the riches of this kingdom, it is called the "incorruptible inheritance" that shall never fade; nay, to comprehend all together, the scripture tells us, "we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." We shall enjoy God in heaven, who is the infinite and indeficient fountain of all good. So that now take into your thoughts, as distinctly as you can, what the joy of heaven is, and what the riches and glory of it are. Then be diligent to serve and glorify God, and prepare for heaven. I know all christians are not fit for meditation, that being so exalted a duty, and heaven so sublime a subject. Yet still there may be an ascent of our thoughts towards it, according to the several representations.

By meditation and serious thoughts we taste and see the goodness of God; and we may enter into that rest, while we are here, by our serious and frequent thoughts of it.

3. Keep up in your souls lively and earnest desires after it. It is the character the apostle gives of all christians, 2. Tim. 4. 8. they love Christ's appearing. "Henceforth (saith the apostle Paul) is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." But you will say, the bitterness of death is not passed. How shall we come to heaven without dying. Let me tell you, the desires of heaven, in a saint, are superior to all his earthly desires. For this desire of heaven, is an overruling one. When Simeon, by an oracle, was told, that as soon as he should see Christ he should die, Luke 2. 26. he did not delay his going to see Christ. It is said, "he came by the Spirit into the temple." His desires were drawn forth to see Christ; and how warmly did his desires beat for heaven, that as soon as he had seen him he might depart and be with God for ever. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And the apostle tells us, Rom. 8. 22. "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth until now; and not only they, but we ourselves also which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the

adoption, the redemption of our bodies." They that have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, by experience know what a blessed thing it is to have the favour of God, and they are inwardly breathing and longing after the full enjoyment of him in heaven. Their adoption, that shall be declared with all solemnity and glory at the great day. "The redemption of their bodies;" that is, the final accomplishment of their redemption: they that have the firstfruits of the Spirit, they long after it.

4. Always preserve your hopes of heaven lively, and powerful in your souls. Hope is a grace that hath a most admirable influence upon the christian life. Faith and hope are twins, they prosper together. They are those two graces that are influential upon all other graces, and they will make a christian do any thing, or suffer any thing for God. It is the hope of heaven that always purifies us, that makes us with *joy* encounter all the allurements and terrors we meet with in the cause of God. The scripture compares it to armour, and makes it one of the chief parts of the spiritual armour, the breastplate of hope and love. It is that which defends us against all the fiery darts of satan and wicked men. Indeed if we deface the seal of the Spirit, and blur our evidences, it will make us act in the service of God, just as a limb out of joint; that is, neither with strength nor comeliness. But if we act grace lively, it will give continual vigour to us in God's ways, and make us wait for the salvation of God. As we read of Jacob, when he was blessing his sons, he breaks out into a rapture, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." This hope will make us wait for salvation till God is pleased to give it. If I have hope, as an anchor, it will make me outride all storms, and cheerfully to endure all troubles for the obtaining of salvation.

5. and Lastly, If you would prepare for eternal life, O then be careful to keep the Lord's day holy. For the sabbath here is a short abridgment of our eternal rest: it is, in truth, an anticipation of it.

Heaven, I told you, is a sabbath rest, it is such a rest as implies the most noble, excellent, vital and joyful exercise of the soul in the entire service of God. And that person that accounts the sabbath-day honourable, and esteemeth it his delight, and says as David, "a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than

reign in the tents of wicked men:" he that looks upon this sacred time as his privilege, that spends this whole day in the service of God, either in the solemn assembly, and public society of God's people, or in his family, or in his closet, and most secret addresses to God, he is preparing for the eternal sabbath above. O what a sad indication of a carnal heart it is to dislike this holy day.

One that looks upon the Lord's day as a melancholy interruption of his carnal pleasures, and saith, "when will the sabbath be ended?" as those carnal wretches among the Jews, hath no affection for God and his service. But they that spend the Lord's day in heavenly exercises, and with holy affections, and pass from one day to another, from hearing to prayer, and from prayer to holy conference, and can entertain their souls with God, and enjoy communion with him in these duties: it is a blessed evidence that they are prepared for the heavenly glory, and for the enjoyment of God in this eternal rest. The soul by the duties of this holy day, and the instruction it receives thereon, is made fit for an eternal communion with God above. What is heaven? Do not deceive yourselves; it is not such a rest as a carnal heart imagines. Heaven is the enjoyment of the divine presence, and consequently the joyful exercise of all our faculties upon God, with regard to his excellencies and perfections, our admiring of him, and loving him, and praising him, and magnifying him with the highest veneration, and with the most inflamed exercise of love, delight and joy, and all those holy affections which will be our work and blessedness in heaven: so much as you exercise of these, so much of heaven you have in you here. Therefore make the Lord's day your joy; and let every hour of this sacred time be dedicated to God. When the sabbath comes, welcome it with the most joyful affections, remembering that the Lord's day here, will prepare you for the eternal sabbath above: and if you be in the Spirit of the Lord upon the Lord's day here, you shall have the Spirit of the Lord to rule and govern you, till you come to the kingdom above, where you shall enjoy this eternal rest that remains to the people of God.

ON

DIVINE MEDITATION. *

PSAL. CXIX. 97.

O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.

THE Book of Psalms is entitled by Calvin, 'The Anatomy of the Soul,' wherein all its inward workings are made visible. In this text we have the working of David's affection, and the motion of his understanding represented to us. Here is the working of his affection, "Oh how love I thy law!" Here is the motion of his understanding, "it is my meditation all the day." Constant love produceth continual meditation on God's law. I intend to fix my discourse upon the latter part, concerning the meditation of David; and I suppose this may be one reason for which he is entitled, "a man after God's own heart," because of the heavenly frame and temper of his spirit.

David was always ascending to God, and descending upon himself; to endear God to his soul, and to engage his soul to God. "When I awake (saith he) I am still with thee." Psal. 139. 8.

* This and the following discourse were taken in short hand, as delivered by the Dr. They were shown to him, and met his approbation as to the faithfulness with which they were taken down, though probably, without the least idea of their publication. They obviously want his finishing hand. ED.

In the discussing of which duty of meditation, I shall use this method.

I. Explain the nature and kinds of it.

II. Show the necessity of it.

III. The time wherein this duty is to be practised.

IV. Those admirable advantages which it brings to the soul.

V. Lay down those rules whereby you may manage it the more cheerfully and successfully.

CHAP. I.

Of the nature of meditation. It is speculative or practical. The latter described, and the description opened. Occasional meditation. The sin of neglecting it, and the advantage of performing it. Deliberate meditation: which is either direct or reflective.

I. MEDITATION is a duty so rare and unpractised, that I think the knowledge of it is not among all christians, the exercise of it is among very few; and therefore if I should tell you that it is an unaccustomed duty, this might be an imperfect account of it.

In the general. Meditation is the vehement motion of the understanding, for that is the leading faculty in this duty. And that I may the more fully explain it to you, I will consider its kinds: it is either speculative, or practical.

1. Speculative meditation is this: when there is a serious inquiry made after some hidden truth, when the soul purposeth to enrich itself with the treasures of knowledge; and this is practised by many rational men; I mean those, whose understandings are more refined and raised than ordinary people's. But if our meditation be merely speculative, it is but like a win-

ter sun, which shines but doth not warm. This therefore I shall not speak of.

2. Practical meditation. The end whereof is to bring the soul to a serious detestation of sin, to a closing with, and embracing of the will of God: this is that I intend to treat of, and it is like blowing of the coals to warm the soul. Which I shall describe to you in this manner.

Meditation, is the serious exercise of the understanding, whereby our thoughts are fixed on the observation of spiritual things in order to practice.

i. Then here is the act, it is the serious exercise of the understanding. And in this respect, meditation is an inward secret duty; the soul retires itself into its closet, and bids farewel to the world. It is an invisible duty to the eye of men; and therefore carnal persons do not relish it; it is an exercise of the understanding; it is that duty wherein we do not converse with drossy outward things. And this is another reason that renders it so difficult to the men of the world. You may observe this as a rule, that every duty the more spiritual it is, the more carnal men disrelish it; and therefore they will rather hear the word than pray in their families; and rather pray than meditate; and what is the reason? Because meditation is a more spiritual duty. Nay further, because it is an exercise of the understanding, therefore it is one of the most noble works that a christian can perform; reason is then in its exaltation. When the soul doth meditate, it doth put forth the most rational acts, and then is the soul most like to God; for God spends an eternity in contemplating his own essence and attributes. That is the act.

ii. The quality of this act, whereby the thoughts are fixed. There is a great inconsistency in the thoughts of men; but meditation doth chain and fasten them to a spiritual object. The soul then lays a command upon itself, that the thoughts (which otherwise are very fleeting and feathery) should be fixed upon its object.

This duty upon this very account is very advantageous: you know a garden that is watered by sudden showers, is more uncertain in its fruit, than when it is refreshed by a constant stream; so when our thoughts are sometimes upon good things, and then run off; when they do but take a glance (as it were) upon holy objects, and then run away; there is not such fruit

brought into the soul as when our minds by meditation do dwell upon them. The rays of the sun may warm us, but they do not inflame unless they are contracted in a burning glass; so some slight thoughts of heavenly things may warm us a little, but will never inflame the soul, till they be fixed by close meditation. Therefore David (who was an excellent man at this duty) tells us, Psal. 112. 7. his heart was fixed, and saith the same concerning the frame of a good man.

iii. Consider the object of this meditation; our thoughts are fixed on the observation of spiritual things: all spiritual truths are symbolical to a gracious heart, and will yield some advantage to the soul; but there are some particular truths which may be of more usefulness. To instance in two or three. Meditation fixeth itself upon the joy and glory of heaven, that so the soul may aspire and breathe after it; it fixeth itself upon the defiling nature of sin, that so the soul may for ever renounce and abhor it; it fixeth itself upon the never dying worm and fire of hell, that a christian may always labour to eschew it, and run from it. Such objects as these the meditation of a christian is fixed upon.

iv. Consider the end of meditation. It is in order to practice. There are many persons that fly over a garden of flowers, (I mean over many spiritual objects) their thoughts run and they gather no honey, they bring no fruit to their souls; but this is not the way of a christian; and therefore spiritual meditation is thus described by God himself. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." Josh. 1. 8. The end of it is to observe for practice and use. So in the Book of Job we have an expression applicable to this purpose; "lo this, we have searched it; so it is, hear it, and know thou it for thy good." Job. 5. 27. Some know things that they may know them, and some know things that they may be known, and taken notice of; but spiritual meditation draws forth the strength of an object for a man's own good. Now this practical meditation, is either occasional or deliberate.

1. Occasional meditation, that is, when the soul spiritualizeth every object, when the understanding is like a limbec that distils something from every thing it sees and views for the good

of the soul. This is that spiritual chemistry that turns all metals into gold. Our blessed Saviour was a most eminent example of this, he drew spiritual matter from natural objects; the gospel is full of parables upon this account.

A christian should labour to see all things in God, and God in all things. Every stream should lead him to the fountain. All things here below should be but a ladder to raise up his soul to God. I shall speak more of this occasional meditation, because it is of great use, and he that neglects it 1. Reflects dishonour upon God. 2. Is injurious to his own soul. 3. Doth neglect the creature. I speak now of those meditations that may be raised by those variety of objects before us.

(1.) He doth reflect dishonour upon God. The end of the creature is this, that God may have and receive a tribute of honour and praise; and therefore God hath infused a reasonable soul into the body of man, that so man might be a considering creature, whereby he hath fitted man for meditation: this duty doth oblige all rational beings. See Job 38. 7. Where the Lord speaks concerning the work of creation, when "the morning stars sang together." As birds sing at the break of day, so in the morning of the creation the angels sang together; and God expects it from man, because he hath given him a reasonable soul. Our five senses are so many doors whereby the external objects are conveyed to us, and the soul is to take notice of them. Nay for this very end did God create man in the last day of the creation, when he had made a feast he brought man as the guest, and when he had provided a palace, he produced man to dwell in it; and what is the reason, but this, that he might glorify the Creator? When God had adorned the heavens with stars, and the earth with flowers; then he brought forth man to give him the praise of all. The first sabbath was instituted for this end, that men might solemnly bless God for the creation of the world.

(2.) He that doth not meditate occasionally injures his own soul. He that makes use of the creatures, and doth not learn by them, robs himself of the best part of that which he should enjoy of them. The creatures are but the adumbrations of the infinite majesty that is above. Now will any man content himself with painted meat for food? So wilt thou content thyself with the bare enjoyment of the creature; and not ascend up to

God? He hath given thee the creatures upon this account, that they might be instruments to raise up thy soul to himself.

(3.) He neglects the creature. There is nothing within the whole circuit of nature, but is of some use to raise up our souls to God. From the sun, to the stone; from the cedar, to the violet; every creature hath a voice to teach us something of God. This whole world is a school for man. All the creatures spell this to us, that there is a God. Now if we neglect this use of it, by our meditation, then we neglect the creature. The whole creation is a well tuned instrument, and man is to make the music; and if we do not by meditation raise up our thoughts to God, we are in the fault. I will not pass it over without reckoning what advantages the soul may get by it.

1st. This will dispose and fit the soul for admiration and praise of God. What is the reason that men do rather wonder at the effects of art, than at the works of God in nature? but this, because they do not meditate upon them? So that many persons set God beneath a painter or carver. Praise and admiration is the going forth of the understanding upon an excellent object. Now when you shall read the book of the creation, you will have reason to praise the Author of it. When you cast your eyes upward and consider the sun, O meditate and take notice of this, that bright sun is but a shadow of God! It is God that hath stretched forth that rich canopy over our heads. When you cast your eye down, and consider the vast body of the earth, it hangs in the air, which is so weak a thing that it cannot hold up a feather, it is founded upon the power of God. When you consider the vast collection of waters in the sea, that such a raging element should be bounded with the sand, which is the weakest thing; how should this teach us likewise to admire his power! He that will but converse with the creatures thus by way of meditation, will learn to admire the unsearchable wisdom, the unspeakable goodness, and the infinite power of God.

2dly. As it will dispose the soul for praise, so for thanksgiving. Now this differs from praise thus; when I praise a thing, I respect the worth of it; when I am thankful for a thing, I respect my interest in it. Now when a man shall consider this great world, and all things here below were made for the glory of God, and the use of man, this will raise our thanksgiving to God, and inflame our love to him. What is the reason that we

are more grateful for small courtesies of men, than for the rich benefits of God? But because we do not meditate on them.

3dly. This occasional meditation upon the creature without us, will be an excellent ground for our faith and dependance upon God. Our Lord Jesus doth urge his disciples to believe upon this account. Saith he, "do you not see the lilies, they neither sow nor spin, yet they are clothed with a richer garment than Solomon? Do you not see the sparrows? there is not one of them falls to the ground without a providence, and you are of more worth than many sparrows." Matt. 6. 26. When a christian shall consider thus; God is the great master of the family of heaven and earth, he makes provision for all his creatures; and if my God takes care of these things that are inferior to me, much more will he take care of me; for it is Christ's argument, "ye are of more value than many sparrows." Nay,

4ly. This occasional meditation, will be a means to cure the most vicious part of our lives; for what is the wickedest part of a man's life? it is his vain thoughts. As in nature there is no vacuity or emptiness, but a vessel is either filled with liquor or the air; now the more water you pour in, the more air goes out. So if you would but store your souls with these occasional meditations, it would thrust out vain and vile thoughts. Oh it is a rare temper when a christian is always upon the wing. When he is like the beams of the sun, they touch the earth, but the body of the sun is fixed in heaven. So it is with a christian when he converseth with the world, but enjoys God.

5ly. This occasional meditation will enliven thy obedience to God. When thou considerest thus with thyself, that thou art always maintained by the expences of his providence, this will encourage thee in his service. A master looks for the service of him he feeds and maintains; so if you consider you are always supported by the charges of free grace, and every good thing given, is the fruit of God's bounty; nay, that all the creatures observe God by a perpetual law, this will likewise raise thy obedience to him.

The sun always runs his course, without error or alteration. All the creatures here below will contradict their own proper nature to be subservient to the will of God, such meditations as these will enliven your obedience. To sum up all: occasional meditation brings this advantage to us, the world, which is the

house of man, is made the temple of God. And then are all the creatures used according to the design and end of God, for which they were created, when all these beams of goodness which shine from the Father of lights, are reflected upon him again.

2. There is deliberate meditation, and that is two-fold: it is either direct or reflexive.

(1.) Direct. When the understanding fixeth itself upon some truth, and draws from it those advantages which may be proper to itself. We read of Isaac, that "he went out into the field to meditate." Gen. 24. 3. The word in its primitive signification hath this import; that he went forth to confer with truth; when there is a mutual and reciprocal discourse between truth and the soul, when the soul meditates upon the law of God, takes the command of God, and speaks to it, and the command speaks to the soul, there is a mutual conference. Therefore it is said, "the law shall talk with thee," Prov. 6. 22. it shall give thee direction how to manage the course of thy life.

(2.) Reflexive meditation; and that is, when there is a solemn discourse between the soul of man, and himself; when there is a colloquy or soliloquy, an inward conference between a man and his own heart, and he inquires how the state and case stands in reference to himself, whether or no reconciled to God? and puts practical questions concerning his everlasting state,

CHAP. II.

Of the necessity of meditation. Deliberate meditation commanded. Hinderances of it, disability, multitude of business, laziness, and sensual pleasures; reflected on. The duty pressed.

II. I Come now to the second head, the necessity of this deliberate meditation. It is not of arbitrary concernment, but it

is necessary, God commands it; saith he to Joshua, "thou shalt meditate in the law day and night, that thou mayest observe to do, according to all that is written therein." Josh. 1. 8. Joshua was a prince of Israel, had numerous employments, and yet notwithstanding such multiplicity of business, saith God to him, "thou shalt meditate." And Hag. 1. 5. "thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways." It is a duty which falls under an absolute command, and this command of God cuts off all the vain pleas of carnal men, and all those hinderances which take them off from this duty. There are four I shall name, all cut off by this command of God.

i. Some pretend their unfitness for this duty; they want both temper and matter; they cannot confine their thoughts to an object, and there is such a barrenness in their souls, they have not spiritual objects to discourse upon. For answer, consider,

1. That man's disability doth not give him an exemption from duty. If you have lost your power, yet God hath not lost his right. He commands you to do it, and will this be a sufficient plea at the last day to say, you cannot do it?

2. This unfitness of thine proceeds from a corruptedness of spirit. Thy heart is carnal and sensual, and therefore thou canst not meditate on spiritual things. If there were but love in thy soul, that would nail thy heart to holy objects. "Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (saith David in the text.) Dost thou think one sin shall excuse another? You cannot meditate, what is the reason? because you have carnal hearts. Nay,

3. This argues thou hast been guilty of the neglect of this duty; thou art unfit because thou hast neglected it. We may see in nature, those beasts that are very fierce, yet are tamed by custom, and manageable by use. A little child will lead a beast when he hath been used to it; so thy thoughts which are very fleeting and unruly, yet if thou didst use to call them to an account, if thou didst issue out a command, and wast resolved to serve God in this duty, this would bring thy thoughts to a consistency.

ii. (And this is the common objection against this and all other duties) Mutitude of business. There are many who will tell you, that they are so harassed by the employments of this

world, that they cannot spend time in this duty solemnly, and seriously. But to answer.

1. Consider, that the duties of religion, are not slight matters, to be performed in an idle hour. Shall those things which are the special acts of thy life, give way to thy worldly occasions? Suppose you should hear a husbandman say thus, I have so much business that I can neither plow nor sow, would you not look upon that man as mad? and doth it not argue a greater madness, for a man to say thus; I have so many employments that I cannot mind, or meditate upon those things which relate to eternity? I told you before, that a prince cannot plead dismission from this duty, although his employments are very numerous. Nay,

2. A multitude of business is so far from dismissing thee from this duty, that it should rather excite thee to it. For argue thus, if my affairs be many and various, I have more need to meditate upon the law of God, that so I may behave myself therein with a clear and cheerful conscience; and therefore pretend not this, for this will never avail thee at the last day.

iii. Much less can spiritual laziness, give us an exemption from this duty; and this (in truth) is the great cause why men do not perform it. Vain men lie upon the bed of security, as if grace would drop out of the clouds; as if glory were the fruit of a few verbal prayers; this is the temper of worldly men, but this will never excuse you from this duty. If you do but consider that heaven itself is the reward of the victorious, "the violent take it by force." Matt. 11. 12. If the duty require sweat and pains, remember that there is a crown which is promised as the reward of it. "Blessed is the man who meditates in the law of the Lord;" Psal. 1. 1, 2. there is a blessed eternity that shall be his portion; and consider this, how many of the world spend the flower of their time, the vigour of their affections, the strength of their bodies, and all in the service of sin; they toil like horses in the service of sin; and shall they spend more of their strength and time in that work which is the worst drudgery, and when their wages is eternal death, than you will do in the work of God?

iv. Sensual pleasure is another hinderance of this duty; the pleasures of the world discompose our souls, and unfit our bodies for the duties of meditation. A voluptuous man is like water,

which is a fluid element, and frequent in motion; who can set a seal upon water? Now when thy soul is drenched in pleasures, it is made fluid, and always moving and running, from one thing to another, and this unfits thee. Oh remember this, the sweetness of religion is incomparably more than all the pleasures of sense. If a christian would but experience this duty of meditation, and observe what a rich income both of grace and joy it produceth to his soul, I should need no argument to press it upon him.

You have heard the nature of meditation, that it is a duty obliging all of us; Oh that I could persuade you to a serious and conscientious exercise of it: Oh that every day you would consecrate some time to meditate on the word. It is an expression of Bellarmine before his book, The Ascent of the Mind to God; writing to a great man, he tells him, 'the pretence of outward employments and the like, cannot excuse him from this duty; for no man can say thus, I have so much business that I cannot eat or sleep; much more let thy soul (which is the better part) have some nourishment every day.' Be frequent in occasional meditation, and raise up thy soul to God by it, and remember the scripture is a comment upon the book of the creature. And set apart some time for solemn meditation. What is the reason the ordinances are so unsuccessful? but because men do not meditate. Why do we make such slow progress in the ways of christianity, and our souls drive like Pharaoh's chariots without wheels? but because we do not meditate. Why are we so frequently vanquished by sin? but for want of meditation.

The great reason why some draw back, and others make no swifter progress, is this, because they are not seriously and constantly and conscientiously every day doing something in this duty.

CHAP. III.

Of the time for meditation. The frequency of it; urged by two motives. The continuance of it. Morning, evening, night, and the sabbath day, the most proper seasons for it.

III. THE time for this duty; and there are three things I shall open to you in reference to that; the frequency of it; the continuance; the seasons when we may most for the advantage of our souls draw forth our meditations.

i. For the frequency.

In the general you must know, the scripture doth not positively determine any set times wherein we are obliged to meditate.

Spiritual prudence and holy affections should give rules to us for the frequency of meditation. The scripture speaks in general terms, David tells us of a godly man, that he "meditates in the law day and night." Psal. 1. 2. Col. 4. 2. Eph. 6. 18. And as for his own practice, although he had the business of a kingdom, and the pleasure of the court to divert him, yet saith he, it is my meditation "all the day," which implies the constant disposition of his soul to this duty, and likewise that ordinarily he was wont to set apart some portion of every day for the performance of it. There are two things which should persuade you to frequency in it.

1. By frequency, you will make your thoughts more pliable for the discharge of this duty. Your souls will be more accomplished and fitted for the exercise of it. You know that customary running makes a person long breathed. So when we often use ourselves to this duty, our thoughts will be more consistent, and we shall be more improved and ripened for the exercise of it. Whereas he that long neglects it, will find that meditation first is unpleasant, then unnecessary, at last burthensome and odious; and this proceeds from disuse.

2. Long interruptions of it will hinder the fruit of it. When there are large gaps and strides between our performance of this

duty, we lose the benefit of our former meditations. As it is with our bodies, if a man makes a free, and liberal meal, this will not maintain his body to morrow, and a day after, but he must have constant food, else nature languishes and decays; so you meditate to day, but if you should neglect it for many days after, you will lose the benefit of it, and the soul decays and languishes. If the bird leaves her nest for a long space, the eggs chill and are not fit for production; but when there is a constant incubation, then they bring forth: so when we leave religious duties for a long space, our affections chill, and grow cold; and are not fit to produce holiness, and comfort to our souls; but when we are constant in this work, then shall we find the advantage of it;

ii. For the continuance of this duty, how long must we continue in it?

I answer, so long ordinarily till thou dost find some sensible benefit conveyed to thy soul. The nature of man doth much disrelish this duty, and we are apt to be soon weary of it; our thoughts are like a bird in the cage, which flutters the more because of its confinement; so our thoughts are apt to run strayingly out, when we confine them to such a duty as this is; but he that begins and doth not proceed, loses the benefit of the duty. As it is in the kindling of a fire in wet wood, you know continuance is that which must cause the flame. When you blow at first, there is a little smoke arises, by holding on you raise sparks, but he that goes forward at last brings it to a flame. So it is in the duty of meditation; when you begin to meditate upon spiritual things, at first you raise a smoke a few sighs towards God; by continuance you raise some sparks of heavenly desires; but at last there is a flame of holy affections that goes up towards God. Now you should not ordinarily leave the work till the flame doth so ascend. When a man goes forth in a calm and serene evening, and views the face of the heavens, he shall first see a star or two twinkle and peep forth; but if he continues, both their number and lustre is increased, and at last he sees the whole heaven is bespangled with stars in every part; so when thou dost meditate upon the promises of the gospel; at first it may be one star begins to appear, a little light conveys itself to thy heart; but go forwards and then thou wilt find when thy thoughts are amplified and ripened, there will be a clear light,

more satisfaction conveyed to thy soul; and in continuance the covenant of grace, will appear bespangled with promises as heaven with stars, and all to give thee satifaction.

iii. For the seasons of meditation.

To that I answer, there is no time in itself but is alike pleasing to God, and there are no hours that are amiss to a gracious spirit. Yet nevertheless there are some particular seasons, wherein our affections are more smart and vigorous, wherein our thoughts are more lively, and more disposed for this duty and contemplation. Now we should choose these seasons. I will instance in some seasons which the scripture speaks of.

1. The morning, after the body hath been composed by the sweetness of rest, then is a fit time for meditation, and there is a double reason for it.

(1.) Because we should consecrate the firstfruits to God. We should pitch our virgin thoughts upon him, and upon spiritual things, before they are opened to the embracements of inferior objects. When you awake in the morning you have many suitors that attend your thoughts. Now have a care that it be not with you as it was in the inn of Bethlehem; strangers took up the rooms in the inn, and Christ was excluded, and put to a manger. So in the morning, vain worldly thoughts take up the room of your souls, but God and Christ are excluded. We should honour the Lord with the first of our substance, and with the first of our thoughts and affections.

(2.) In the morning meditate upon this account, because the influence of the duty will be visible in your lives in the succeeding parts of the day. That wherewith a vessel is first seasoned conveys a lasting savour and tincture to it. So holy meditation, leaves an abiding tincture upon our hearts all the day. It is an excellent expression of Solomon (speaking of the law of God) "When thou awakest it shall talk with thee." Prov. 6. 22. What is the meaning? As servants come to their masters in the morning, and receive rules from them, how they shall direct their business in the day: so a gracious heart takes directions from the law of God, in the morning how he should manage himself all the following parts of the day. Gen. 24. 63.

2. Another season for meditation, is the evening. For this we have the example of Isaac recorded in scripture, that he went out to meditate at even-tide.

3. In the night season, when our bodies are reposed in the bed, then our souls should be reposed in the bosom of God by sweet meditation. We have the command of the Lord for this, "Commune with your own hearts upon your beds and be still." Psal. 4. 4. And there is a double argument which may move you to this night-meditation.

(1.) Because then our souls are sequestered from the business of the world; they are retired from all the noise and tumult of things here below, they are not distracted with the incursions of sensible objects; and at such a time as that is, we are best fitted for meditation. Secrecy, silence and rest, dispose the soul for meditation; and all these we enjoy in the night season; then we are excluded from company, motion, and business.

(2.) Because when the curtain of darkness is drawn over the world, our hearts are apt to be filled with a religious fear of God, our souls are more composed in the night, and we have more awful apprehensions of God. And therefore observe the connexion, "stand in awe and sin not, commune with your own hearts upon your beds. The bed is an image and a representation of the grave," and at such a time as that is a man may be more serious and composed in this work. David says, "My reins also instruct me in the night season," Psal. 16. 7. the meaning is David's inward thoughts did then read a lecture of divinity to him.

4. The sabbath day, is a season for meditation. This should be the temper of every christian to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day. On that day when our Saviour did arise from the earth, our souls should ascend to heaven.

Consider with yourselves, the Lord's day is a type of heaven, and contemplation is the work of heaven. The rest of the sabbath is but an abridgement of that long eternity which the saints shall enjoy with God; and the employment of heaven is contemplation. The glorified spirits above are always exercised in a steady view and consideration of God's infinite glory. Now the sabbath being a type of heaven, and meditation being the work of heaven, certainly this day is the most fit season for meditation. As for you who disrelish this duty, and are unacquainted with it, do you expect heaven? Your indisposition to this duty will be a bar to keep you from blessedness, and hinder you from entering into that rest. A gracious soul upon the Lord's day by

his meditation may converse with God; he may discourse with the inhabitants of another world, he may enjoy as much of God as this interposing veil of flesh and blood will admit; the only difference between a saint in heaven, and a saint upon earth who meditates upon God, is in respect of the degrees and the manner of their fruition. For otherwise a saint upon earth enjoys heaven especially on the Lord's day, when every duty receives a special blessing, and therefore the duty of meditation.

CHAP. IV.

Of the advantages of meditation. It improves the faculties of the soul, by opening the understanding, and raising the affections. Makes prayer, the word, and sacraments effectual. Improves the graces of faith, hope and love. It brings comfort. Increases holiness.

IV. THE advantages of meditation, are so many and so rich, that methinks the consideration of them might draw forth the most sluggish spirit to the performance of this duty. I confess the duty is difficult, but consider the pleasantness of it, out of the strong comes sweetness. The advantages of it I shall rank under five heads.

i. Consider what an improvement the faculties of your souls will receive by meditation.

1. I will begin with the understanding faculty.

Meditation is the nurse of wisdom, it is the most excellent instrument to convey knowledge to the soul. There are two defects in every man's understanding, there is darkness, and there is a fluidness in his understanding, that he cannot fix himself upon an object.

Meditation cures both these. For the darkness of his understanding, meditation takes the veil from the face of truth. The glory and beauty of truth, doth not consist in an expres-

sion, but we ought to penetrate into the nature of it by meditation. We have an expression of Solomon, speaking of knowledge and understanding, he bids us to "Search for her as for hidden treasure;" Prov. 4. 2. observe the expression, you know jewels, do not lie upon the surface of the ground, but they are hid in the receptacles of the earth, you must dig for them before you can enjoy them. Truth is in Profundo, and our understandings are dark. Now you must search for the truth of God as for hid treasures. He that rides post through a country is never able to make a full description of it; and he that takes but a transitory view of the truths of the gospel, will never come to the full knowledge of them. It is meditation that makes them appear to our eye in their beauty and lustre. I have read a similitude of Peter Martyr that converted one. Suppose you should see a company of men dancing at a great distance, you would look upon the men as full of madness and frenzy; but if you draw near, then you will find their motions regular and full of art: so many mysteries of the gospel if you look upon them at a distance, they are above reason, they seem to oppose sense, you cannot see the truth of them; but bring them to a near distance within the view of thy soul by meditation, and then you will see their excellency and glory.

Meditation is that that doth take away the darkness of the understanding; and then for the fluidness of the understanding, because it is apt to spring from one thing to another. Meditation in its very nature is the fixing of it. Take one instance, but it is above all, it is such an instance, as should command the most knowing persons in the world to follow, 1 Pet. 1. 10. There you shall find the words, "of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you," and verse 12. speaking of the mysteries of the gospel, "The angels desire to look into them."

Now observe, if the prophets who had the immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost, did make a serious inquiry, and narrow search into their own prophecies, that they might come to know the meaning of them; should not this encourage us to make inquiry into the truth of God by meditation? Nay the angels of heaven, they bow themselves and pry into the mysteries of the gospel by a serious contemplation.

2. Consider, as meditation doth open the understanding, and presents truth to the brain, so it raiseth the affections. Knowledge without meditation to warm the affections, is like the glancing of a beam upon a wave, it fills it with a little clarity, but doth not heat it; so when there are many notions of truth in the brain, if meditation doth not apply them to the heart, and fix them upon the soul, the affections have no warmth by them. Slight visions make shallow impressions. He that with a running eye looks upon a piece of broidery, doth not see the curiousness of the work, and therefore doth not admire it. So when we with a running eye look upon the truths of the gospel, no wonder our affections are not raised towards them. David speaking concerning his meditation, "While I was musing the fire burned, my heart was hot within me." Psal. 39. 3. It is musing makes the fire to burn. Thus meditation enlightens the understanding, and inflames the affections.

ii. It is the great instrument whereby the ordinances of the gospel become effectual to us. I shall instance in three of them. 1. Prayer. 2. Hearing. 3. Receiving the Lord's Supper. And you shall see what an eminent advantage meditation conveys to all these.

1. For prayer. Meditation before prayer, is like the tuning of an instrument and setting of it for the harmony. Meditation before prayer doth mature our conceptions, and exercises our desires. What is the reason that in prayer there is such a slight discurrency in our thoughts, that our thoughts are like dust in the wind carried to and fro; but only for want of meditation? What is the reason that our desires like an arrow shot by a weak bow do not reach the mark? but only this, we do not meditate before prayer; he that would but consider before he comes to pray to the pure majesty of God, the things that he is to pray for, pardon of sin, and the life of glory, how would this cause his prayers to ascend like incense towards God? The great reason why our prayers are ineffectual, is because we do not meditate before them. David expresseth prayer, by meditation; "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation." Psal. 5. 1.

2. For hearing the word, the benefit of that exceedingly depends upon meditation. Before we hear the meditation is like the plough which opens the ground to receive the seed, and after

we have heard the word it is like the harrow which covers the new sown seed in the earth, that the fowls of the air may not pick it up: meditation is that which makes the word full of life and energy to our souls. What is the reason that the most of men come to hear the word as the beasts did into Noah's ark, they came in unclean and they went out unclean? The reason is because they do not meditate on the truths they hear; it is but just like putting money into a bag with holes, presently it falls out: so the truths they hear preached are put into shallow neglective memories, and they do not draw them forth by meditation, therefore hearing the word is so little effectual; it is said "Mary pondered these things in her heart." When men are sick of the lientery disease, (in which they do cast forth their meat as they receive it in) the body cannot be nourished, there cannot be those degrees of strength that others receive; but when our meat is digested, then it conveys blood, spirits and strength to all the parts of the body; hearing the word is like ingestion, and when we meditate upon the word that is digestion; and this digestion of the word by meditation produceth warm affections, zealous resolutions, and holy actions; and therefore if you desire to profit by hearing of the word, meditate.

3. For the receiving the sacrament, there you shall find that meditation is necessary before we receive, and in receiving. Before we receive, the great duty commanded is examination; now examination is managed by this duty of meditation: he that meditates aright concerning Jesus Christ, who is the author, the object and the end of the sacrament, he that considers with himself, what rich testimonies there are of grace to the worthy receiver, and what sure marks of vengeance to the unworthy receiver, how will this dispose his soul for coming to this ordinance? He that meditates of his infinite misery out of Christ, and of his felicity in Christ, how will this sharpen his desires to come to the Lord Jesus? So in receiving, we should then meditate upon the sufferings of Christ; for the sacrament is the abridgment of Christ's agony; and upon the affections of Christ, for the sacrament is the copy of his love. And he that receives the sacrament with such meditations, will find his graces to be better and stronger, than the graces of others who neglect this

duty. The sacrament is food, and so you must receive it with an appetite, with strong desires, and it must be concocted by meditation.

iii. The third advantage, the graces of the soul receive likewise an increase, and an advantage by meditation. Graces and meditation are reciprocal causes of each other; as food maintains our life, and our life dispenses our food, so here meditation maintains grace, and grace exerciseth meditation. There are three graces I will instance in, which all receive support, and strength from this duty.

1. The grace of faith. Our thoughts are the purveyors of our faith; when faith declines and languishes, when our thoughts are ready to terminate in despair, then meditation brings a cordial to our faith, and raiseth and recovers it. Meditation upon the grace of God, and upon his power, is the most eminent supporter of faith in all our temptations.

Meditation upon the grace of God. When a bleeding soul considers thus, God hath promised mercy, not to those who deserve it, but to those who want it; the promises are not built upon goodness within me, but upon grace without me: this raiseth faith, and produces life and spirit into it. So for the power of God, when we are in the midst of external wants and many dangers and hazards. When the soul shall meditate thus; that God by one fiat, by one word, gave being to the world, that his power is infinite, how doth this underprop our faith? We have examples of this recorded of Abraham, it is said that "Abraham accounted that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." Heb. 11. 19. How did Abraham's faith become victorious? God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac. Now the promise was this, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Now how did he preserve his faith? Considering or meditating, that "God was able to raise him up even from the dead." Abraham considered thus much, there is such a a power in God, that rather than the promise should be made void, the resurrection of Isaac shall be more miraculous than his birth, God is able to raise my son from the ashes of a consumed sacrifice; and therefore Abraham offers up his son willingly, as to his disposition and frame. So meditation of the truth of God, that he is the Father of lights, in whom there is no shadow of change, the Holy

One of Israel that cannot lie, that his life and honour are engaged for the performance of all his promises; this supports and underprops all our declining faith, and makes it victorious.

2. Hope, which is another grace in the soul that thrives, and flourishes by the help of meditation. Faith is confirmed, and hope is enlarged by it. The christian who meditates upon these incomparable (but invisible) things that belong to another world: Oh this will enlarge his hope and make it the more generous and the more active. If a christian would but by meditation consider all those enamouring notions of heaven, and blessedness which the scripture lays down: if he would consider it as his portion, as a treasure, as a crown of glory, how would this enlarge his hope? Experience tells us, that men of low thoughts have barren hopes; the weakness of our hope, and the lowness of it proceeds from the neglect of meditation.

3. The grace of love that is begun and refined by meditation in the soul of every true believer; there is a love of desire towards God, and a love of complacency in him. Now meditation doth fire both these; there is a love of desire in him towards God, there is an affectionate longing after him: a thirsty love in the soul, that longs for an interest in Christ. Now what doth it proceed from? but from this, from a consideration of our infinite want of Christ, from a serious meditation of those treasures of grace that are in the Lord Jesus. And then for the love of complacency, that flows from this. As the love of desire flows from the meditation of Christ's benefits: so the love of complacency arises from the meditation of his excellencies also. The person of Christ is invested with the most attractive glory, he is the image of his Father: now it is meditation that opens to us these excellencies of Christ, and the glorious blessings we receive from him, and so raiseth love of delight in him. It is meditation that blows our love into a purer flame, and raises it to a higher degree; therefore as you desire to have your love refined and raised towards God, meditate.

iv. Meditation, as it advanceth the graces of the soul, so the comforts of the soul. God conveys comfort to us in a rational way, and although he is able to rain manna in the wilderness, and to cast in comforts to our souls, without any labour of ours, yet usually he dispenseth comforts according to this standing rule: he that doth not work, shall not eat, he that doth not la-

bour in the duties of religion, shall not find the sweetness of religion. Now meditation is the serious and active performance of the soul, to which God hath promised comfort. I will open this by this consideration. The promises of the gospel do not convey comfort to us, as they are recorded in the word merely but as they are applied by meditation: I will illustrate it by this similitude, the grapes while they hang upon the vine, do not produce that wine which cheers the heart of man; but when they are squeezed in the wine press then they yield forth their liquor, which is of such a cheering nature: so the promises while they are in the word barely, do not send forth that sovereign juice, which cheers our hearts; but when we ponder them in our souls, and press them by meditation, then the promises convey the water of life to us. There is an expression of David, which suits with this, Psal. 63. compare the 5th and 6th verses, "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;" observe the connexion, meditation turns the promises into marrow, it conveys the strength of them to our souls. One morsel of meat chewed and digested, dispenses more nourishment than a greater quantity that is swallowed down whole; so one promise that is ruminated upon, and digested by meditation, conveys more comfort than a bundle of promises in the head, that are not meditated upon, which we did not consider. Nay, consider this, the comfort which meditation brings, is the most spiritual, refined joy that we are capable of. The pleasures of the world may excite laughter, but they cannot produce solid joy; but meditation produceth solid joy in the heart; the things of the world may gratify the bestial part of our bodies, but it is spiritual meditation that rejoiceth the angelical part of our souls within us. Indeed meditation is that which makes a man to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem; he can take a walk in the paradise of God every day, and pluck fruits off the tree of life, and draw water from the wells of salvation. He that performs conscientiously the duty of meditation, doth maintain such a correspondence with God as the angels do: such a one doth enter upon his possession of heaven by degrees and steps. Therefore if you desire the comforts that are spiritual and heavenly, perform this duty.

v. It is eminently useful to produce the power of holiness in our

conversations. There are two parts of holiness in our lives, the one is the discharge of religious duties, the other is the repelling of temptations; now meditation enables us to both these.

1. It enables us to the discharge of religious duties, because it conveys to the soul the lively sense and feeling of God's goodness; so the soul is encouraged to duty. David hath an expression, "Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes, and I have walked in thy truth." Psal. 26. 3. Meditation is that which makes religious duties to be refreshments to us; we look upon them as our ornament, and not as fetters, because meditation makes them sweet to us. You shall find in scripture there is a connexion between meditation and practice, between memory and duty. Therefore it is said, Numb. 15. 40. "Thou shalt remember these things to do them," and Psal. 119. 11. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee," and verse 15. "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways;" meditation is that which fills the soul with a lively sense of God's goodness, and so encourageth us to duty.

2. Then secondly, for repelling temptations, and for the conquest of them meditation is eminently useful. For consider the lapses of God's people proceed usually from incogitancy, and forgetfulness: if Peter had remembered that præmonition of Christ, he had not fallen into that sin; but because he was incogitant and forgetful, he fell into a snare: so we are surprised by incogitancy and neglect. Now meditation is that duty that draws forth suitable truths against every temptation, the memory is the exchequer of the soul, and there is a treasury of God's commands; now meditation goes into that treasury, and draws forth fresh arguments against every temptation, and therefore if you desire to be holy in your lives, perform this duty, and be serious and conscientious in the discharge of it. What an orator said in another case when he was asked, what was most eminent in rhetoric and oratory, gave this answer, pronunciation, pronunciation, pronunciation; so if I should be asked what do I think is the best means and way to advance the faculties, to make the ordinances fruitful, to increase grace, to enlarge our comfort, to produce holiness and the like, I should answer, meditation, meditation, meditation.

CHAP. V.

Of rules for the managing meditation to advantage. Rules which respect the person. Freedom from the guilt of sin. Purity of heart. A treasure of divine truths. Sobriety in the use of worldly things. And fervent love to spiritual ones. Rules which respect the object. It should be what has a tendency to advance holiness, suitable to our present state and temper. Rules which respect the duty. We should be as methodical, and particular as may be. Discharge ourselves of worldly things. Beg the assistance of the Spirit. Stop the first excursions of our thoughts: which will fix our minds. We must meditate by way of argument, comparison, emission in complaints and desires, and by impressions charging and checking our own souls: which will warm our affections.

V. THE rules, I shall reduce to these three heads;

Those which concern the person, that is to exercise this duty;—Those which respect the choice of our object;—Those rules which may direct us how we should meditate on the object with success and advantage.

i. Those which concern the person exercising this duty.

1. Rule. "Labour to have thy heart cleansed from the guilt of sin." A tumultuous conscience is very unfit for so calm and sedate an exercise as meditation. It is said, that when an elephant comes to the water, it disturbs the stream that it may not see the representation of its own visage; thus it is with guilty consciences, they cannot endure to look in the glass of meditation lest they should have a view of their native form. We read concerning the devils when they were near Christ, they asked him whether he were "come to torment them before their time?" This is the language of guilty creatures, therefore they do in effect utter the same words with the devil; "Depart from us we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Job 21. 19. He that hath the sense of his guilt upon him, when he meditates on God, this brings to his remembrance the holiness, the justice, the truth of God; and this reminds him of his ruin, and so makes the duty very unpleasant to him. And by the way, take notice, this is the reason why wicked men are always either carried away with the pleasures or the business of the world, so

that they may not have time to make inward reflections upon their own state and meditate on their own condition. As it is with a mill, if you do not put corn into it, it will grind itself; so they fill their minds with the vanities and businesses of the world, that they may not grind upon themselves: therefore cleanse your souls by hearty applications of Christ's blood, if you desire to be fit for this duty.

2. Rule. "Labour for a pure heart." The former rule respected the guilt of sin, this the defilement. Meditation is founded in the purgative part of religion. There is a double reason for this rule, partly because sin darkens the understanding, it defiles and dims the soul. A soiled glass yields no clear representation of things: so when the heart is soiled with the filth of sin, it is not fit for this duty. Partly upon this account, because sin as it darkens the understanding, so it unfits the soul to receive any benefit by this duty. That cloth which is white is receptive of any colour, but that which is black will not change. So here, when the heart is cleansed and purified from the stains of sin, it will be moulded into the form of any truth the soul meditates upon; but when the blackness of sin is there, it is not receptive of any colour, or very difficultly. Gerson makes the first step of meditation, to be an humble repentance, upon this account, because it cleanseth the soul.

3. Rule. "Treasure up in your souls a stock of spiritual truths." Truth is the food of the soul, upon which it exerciseth its digestion and depastion; when a man hath laid in, he may lay out. Mat. 12. 35. there is an excellent expression, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things." Truths in the soul are like gold in the ore: meditation coins the gold and brings it forth, in holy discourses and pious actions. Whereas where there are no spiritual mines of truth in the soul, it is no wonder the thoughts coin dross and vanity. Ignorance is that which doth impoverish the soul, and causeth us to be barren in this duty of meditation.

4. Rule. "Sobriety in the use of all worldly things," is an excellent help to meditation. A holy art of moderation, either in respect of the cares of the world, or the pleasures of the world; for an excess in these discomposes the mind, and unfits the body for this spiritual duty.

The business of the world, to speak of that first, will unfit us

for the duty of meditation. When the mind ascends this hill, it must be light and free, and the burden of our cares must be laid aside. Have you not seen a bird, when her wings are limed, how unable she is to put forth herself, and to ascend by flight into the air? Thus it is with a man who is encumbered with worldly business, his thoughts are clinged together, and his soul is unable to take its flight, and to mount upward. And therefore we have an expression in the canticles, Christ speaks to his spouse, "Come my spouse let us go forth into the field," Cant. 7. 11. which imports a retreat and sequestration from the business of the world, and a retirement from the hurry of worldly affairs.

And as the business of the world, so the pleasures of this world likewise exceedingly unfit us for this duty. When children's minds are set upon play, they are very unwilling to go to school; so when men's minds are set upon pleasure, this alienates their hearts from such severe exercises as meditation. I have read concerning Jerome, he complains of himself, that although he was in a desolate wilderness, yet his fancy conveyed him to the dances of the Roman ladies. So it is with pleasurable persons, let them sequester themselves from the visible company of men, yet their fancies are filled with corporeal resemblances: carnal pleasures make the heart fat, and so make the soul unable to perform such exercises as this is. It is said concerning the ass which is the dullest of all animals, that his heart is fattest of all creatures; this is very applicable to this duty of meditation. And therefore as you desire to be free and vigorous in this duty or exercise, disentangle yourselves from the cares and pleasures of the world.

5. Rule. "Labour for fervent love to spiritual things," and this will be an excellent help for the performance of this duty. Holy and lively affections do both incline and chain the thoughts to spiritual objects. As all rivers proceed from the sea, and return to the sea; so our thoughts proceed from our affections, and our affections are enkindled by our thoughts. This is the reason why the master corruption, doth engross our thoughts, because our love is set upon it. Thoughts and affections are reciprocal causes of each other. As the body conveys heat to the clothes, and the clothes preserve the warmth of the body; so our thoughts are excited by our affections, and then our affections

do cast forth their strength and efficacy upon our thoughts. Our thoughts enkindle our affections, and when the affections are kindled they cause our thoughts to boil over, Psalm 39. 3. "While I was musing, the fire burned," and David says in the text, "Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day."

ii. Those rules which respect the object, that is to be meditated upon, the first of which is this.

1. Choose such an object as hath a tendency in it to advance holiness. There are some points in religion, which are chiefly speculative, there are others which are more practical. Now as the tops of mountains are barren, but the humble vallies fruitful. So speculative points are barren, and the meditation of them is ineffective. There are some slight dishes which gratify the palate, but have no substance in them to feed and strengthen the body: so there be some truths which though they are delicious, yet they do not produce holiness; and although they may please the taste, yet they yield no solid nourishment to the soul. Therefore choose such an object, as may at once more clear thy understanding in respect of knowledge, and also inflame thy affections God-wards. We lose much of the benefit of meditation, when we pitch our thoughts upon those objects which are not most fruitful. And here by the way observe, that many meaner christians do thrive more in holiness, than those of richer gifts upon this account, one sort are more subtile in the motion of their understandings, and the other are more sincere; they meditate upon those objects most fruitfully in reference to their lives, and so they make a sensible progress in the ways of religion, whereas others are barren.

2. Meditate upon those objects which are suitable to thy state. Our state respects either our temporals or our spirituals. Now for our spirituals, I would direct your meditation answerable to that expression of Christ; where it is said, "the Spirit shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." John 16. 8. Now proportion your choice to the state wherein you are: as for example, art thou in a state of security? Let the object of thy meditation be the evil of sin, its intrinsical evil, and its consequential evil. Is thy soul pressed with the guilt of sin? Let thy meditation then respect the righteousness of Christ, the infinite sufficiency and amplitude, that is, in the

merits the Lord Jesus, whereby he is able to repair all the injuries that have been offered to God's justice. Is thy soul sensible of the worth and excellency of the divine image and life? Then meditate upon judgment, upon holiness, how thou art obliged by an indispensable necessity, to live purely and according to the gospel. So in reference to temporals, let your meditation be suitable to your state: are you honourable? Then let your meditation be concerning your own vileness. Thus when David was raised to the throne: "What am I Lord, and what is my father's house?" Or, do you abound with the riches of this life? Let your meditation be how to exercise your stewardship to the best advantage. "The liberal man deviseth liberal things." Isa. 23. 8. So, is your state afflictive? Then meditate upon the wisdom of God, who dispenseth not a grain more than your strength shall be able to bear, or whatever attribute may yield you comfort or advantage in such a state.

3. Choose such an object as doth correspond and is fit to present the temper of thy soul. God hath been pleased to allow us variety of objects. Sometimes we may contemplate the mysteries of the gospel, sometimes the beauties of the creation: when we are not fit for the severe exercises of the closet, we may go forth into the field, and there may consider the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, which are visible in all this works.

iii. Thirdly, and that which I principally eye, is, to lay down some rules, to direct you about the manner how you should perform this duty. The person being disposed by those qualities; and the object being chosen; how you should then meditate upon that object: the general end you should propound to yourselves is, both to taste and see how good the Lord is; at once to have beams of light in our understandings, and influences of heat upon our affections; but sight must go before tasting, therefore our endeavour must be to manage this work aright: those that go by water for pleasure, do not cast out the net; but those do so that make it their gain and trade, that so they may catch the fish: so if we do intend to make an advantage to our souls in this duty, we should cast the net aright. Now there are two things I will open. 1. How you should fix your thoughts. 2. How you should warm your affections when you are meditating on the mercies of God.

1. For fixing our thoughts observe the following particulars.

(1.) Meditate in a methodical way. Begin with those things which are low, and then ascend higher, you will find a sensible advantage, by an orderly management of this duty; for this will be of special use to confine our thoughts. When we run from one object to another without order, we lose the benefit. As when there is a crowd of persons press forward to go through one door, all are hindered in their progress: so when our thoughts run from one object to another, we cannot proceed nor make such sensible progress as otherwise we might do, one thought hinders another. He that intends to go several ways, goes no way: so he that lets the eye of his soul run from one object to another without fixing, loseth the advantage of this duty; and therefore let us use an order and method in our thoughts.

(2.) Let your meditation be as particular as you can, in reference to the nature and circumstances of the object. You know that particulars are affecting, and therefore we should labour to have as minute thoughts concerning every part of the object as we can; as to give you an instance, suppose my meditations were fixed upon the mercies of God, then the best way were to rank these mercies under several heads. Some are spiritual, some are corporal. If you would meditate upon the common mercies of this life, then take your rise with David, from the very first beginning of your being. "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written;" (as an artificer first draws a model, and then finisheth it.) And then proceed a little, he brought me safely into the world, (which mercy would be thought miraculous but that it is ordinary.) And when I came, he provided two bottles of milk for me before I could help myself; and all my days mercy and my soul have been as twins of the same age, and day; and then consider the mercies of infancy, and childhood, and youth, and riper years. And then think of the mercies that respect the day, and the night; how God is like a pillar of cloud, and fire; and then divide these temporal mercies, some respect the estate, some the name, and some the health. He that shall thus meditate upon the mercies of God, he will by experience find, that he needs an eternal life to be thankful for the mercies of this temporal life.

(3.) Before you begin the work, let there be a serious discharge of all worldly things; whenever we engage in any duty we are apt to look back, because we do not leave the world behind us. Therefore when you begin this work, issue forth a practical decree, a strong resolution that you will not endure any vain thought to interpose between God and your souls; this is the girding up of our minds, that so we may not be hindered in our race.

(4.) Beg the assistance of the Holy Spirit: he that is able to stop the sun in its flight, and to bound the waters in their course; he is able to fix thy thoughts and to stop their motion.

(5.) Be careful to prevent or stop the first excursion of thy thoughts. Many times our thoughts hurry us away before we are aware; whereas, if there were a careful watchfulness, to prevent the first diversions, we should be more constant. In a town where there is a constant watch and ward, vagrants are stopped from entering, and hindered from conversing there; so if thy soul watch the first motions of thy thoughts, those vagrant excursions of them would be prevented. Yet take this caution: suppose thy thoughts on a sudden do glance forth upon a carnal object; do not pore upon the thought, but rather proceed in thy work. For here is the devil's policy, to get that by reflex acts, which he cannot get by direct acts. And many times a christian loseth the advantage of the duty, by poring upon his vain thoughts. It is just like a crier in the court that calls for peace, and by his noise makes more disturbance. A man that is bent to go a journey, doth not regard the barking of every dog; so when thou dost design to ascend this mount, do not regard every vain thought that may be injected; but strengthen thy resolutions, and go forward in the discharge of thy work.

2. How we may perform this duty so as to inflame and fire our affections: for that take these four particulars.

(1.) When thou dost meditate upon a subject, which is of spiritual concernment, let thy thoughts work upon it by way of argument, and serious consideration both of the causes and of the effects of the object. As now suppose I were meditating upon the conversion of a sinner; here my thoughts should ascend to the cause of this conversion; it is the Spirit of holiness, he that is able by his power to raise from the grave, is alone able to raise from the power of sin: and then we should descend to the effects

of things, for the effects are interpreters of the nature of their causes. As to instance; suppose I were meditating upon sin; consider the effects of sin, the fall of the angels, they were the courtiers of heaven, and the associates of God; but sin is that which cast them from their first habitation. So if you bring your eye lower to the fall of man; certainly the poison is very deadly, one draught of which destroyed the whole race of mankind. If you look upon the effects of sin, which are inward, there you shall find terrors of conscience; there is a spiritual tophet which sin hath enkindled: sin is that which causeth a man to walk up and down with a hell in his own bosom. If you look outward, upon men's bodies, and consider the effects of sin, all the diseases from the scorching fever, to the lingering consumption; all are the effects of sin; and chiefly if you regard the terrors of another life, if you consider the never dying worm, and the ever living flames; these things discover the nature of sin.

(2.) That so this work may be the more efficacious upon your affections; manage it as by argument, so by comparisons. 1. By similitudes. 2. By comparing those things which are opposite one to another.

1st. By similitudes: they have an excellent force to prevail upon the soul, they are of great use, both to enlighten the understanding, and inflame the affections. To enlighten the understanding; a similitude is that which presents a truth clearly to our apprehensions: by the knowledge of a material thing that is visible, we come to the sight of a spiritual thing that is invisible; and therefore our Saviour trained up his disciples by earthly similitudes: you know a double medium helps the sight, therefore old men look through spectacles. Similitudes are like a double medium, and as they help our apprehensions, so they exceedingly inflame our affections. We naturally love pictures; now a similitude is the picture of truth, for fancy to look and gaze on; for instance, we all of us naturally are full of timorousness in the dark. Why do I not much more tremble at hell? "For there is blackness of darkness." We all of us fear death: then why do I not fear sin? which is the death of the noble part, which destroys the soul. Thus if you find your hearts dull and sluggish in the duties of religion, compare thyself with the creatures beneath thee, as thou art a rational being. The sun

and stars obey their Creator by a constant law; there is an unalterable tenour of their obedience: and why do I swerve, and wander from the ways of holiness? They will contradict their private nature, to obey the commands of God; and why should I gratify my carnal lusts and pleasures to disobey God? As the Lord said to them in Malachi, when they were negligent in reference to their religious duties, he bids them put it into a temporal case, "offer it to thy governor, will he be pleased with thee." &c. Malachi 1. 8.

2dly. Manage this comparison by way of dissimilitude, and compare things that are unlike one with another, and this will work on our affections. For instance, compare the easiness of Christ's yoke with the bondage of sin, and this will raise your affections, and intender them in reference to the Lord Jesus. Compare the beauty of holiness with the exorbitances of a carnal life: consider every sinner hath many lords, many tyrants over him; but he that is a servant of Christ, hath but one master, who is full of meekness and sweetness. These lords command contrary things; and thus while one lust ravishes the soul to itself, another hales it to another object; whereas all the commands of Christ are regular, and they all concentre in one end, to advance the glory of God. Then consider the different fruit; those that are slaves to their lusts, have sin for their work, and hell for their wages; their service is drudgery, and their recompence eternal death: but the ways of God are liberty here, and glory hereafter. The commands of the gospel, are not fetters, but ornaments, and they bring a crown; how would this cause the soul with a greater willingness to submit to the commands of the gospel! Shall wicked men draw sin "as with cart-ropes?" Isa. 5. 18. that is, shall they toil and spend themselves in the service of their lusts? And shall I refuse obedience to that God whose service is perfect freedom?

3. When thou art meditating that so it may be fruitful; let there be frequent emissions of thy soul to God: let thy thoughts be moulded into words, and that, (1.) By way of complaint. (2.) By way of desire.

(1.) By way of complaint, as when thou art meditating concerning the glory of another world, then reflect upon thy soul thus, and complain to God, Oh wretched man that I am, who am chained to this earth! My treacherous nature betrays me

to the vanities of this life. Oh that I should be insensible of spiritual joys! and charmed by sensual delights! Oh that I should be so mad upon and fond of perishing vanities, and dis esteem and undervalue a blessed eternity! Thus we should complain to God of ourselves, there should be confession mixed with this complaint.

(2.) These emissions towards God should go forth in a way of desire and request to him. We should breathe forth our souls thus. Oh when shall my brazen affections be melted? When shall I be unglued from the world? What, shall I be a stranger in my affections, as I am in my residence? O Lord thou who hast prepared glory for my soul, prepare my soul for glory.

4. Manage this duty, by way of impressions upon the heart, when you have thus sent forth your souls to God. As it is when a vapour is drawn up to heaven, it afterwards returns to the earth: so when thy thoughts have been drawn up towards God, then they should descend upon thyself, and that in a double way. (1.) By way of charge to quicken thy soul to duty. (2.) By way of check and restraint to keep thy soul from sin.

(1.) By way of charge to quicken thy soul to duty. As when a christian considers with himself, how superficial he is in the service of God, how (many times) he offers a sacrifice without a heart; let him charge his soul thus. My soul, consider that God doth both deserve, and require thy affections: he is the Maker, the Searcher, the Redeemer, and Judge of spirits; in him there is majesty and purity conjoined; and therefore when thou art engaged in any religious service, draw near to him with thy spirit. Why should we debase God, when we pretend to honour him? and deal with his name as the devil did with the body of Christ; who raised him to a pinnacle of the temple, intending to throw him down? So many seem to honour God, when at the same time they debase him.

(2.) By way of check and restraint from sin. Whenever any temptation presents itself to us: let us by meditation thus argue. What will be the fruit of these things? Can we resist the wrath of God? Are we stronger than he? The temptation is pleasing, but the issue of compliance will be dreadful. The time is a coming when there will remain nothing of sin, but the worm and the flame. Thus we should check our hearts, and repress

them in their motions towards sin, that we may stop the career of our sins, and may be restrained from the commission of them.

CHAP. VI.

A use of trial. The difference between holy men and others, shown by their thoughts: which are the immediate issues of the heart, and the invisible, delightful, continued acts of the soul. Necessary cautions. A difference between voluntary and injected thoughts. Good thoughts pleasant to us, and productive of holiness: else no sign of our spiritual state.

FIRST by way of trial. This assertion of David, contains the character of a man that is truly gracious. "Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day." And it is that which is the original distinction between a carnal and a gracious frame of heart; a gracious man's soul is the "chamber of presence for the Holy Spirit." The soul of a carnal man, is the devil's thoroughfare: temptations are let in, and corruptions are let out. You know a painter may draw the external representations of a man, but he cannot set forth the vitals, the inward parts: so it is here, although there may be a similitude between the external practices of a saint, and a carnal wretch; yet the inward motions of the understanding, and the working of the affections, cannot be represented by a wicked man. If you take the whole world of unregenerate men, and look into their breasts; you will find that some of them like the camelion, feed upon the air of honour; and others like the serpent, feed upon the dust of profit; and most like the swine satisfy themselves with the will of carnal pleasures. This is the temper of their souls, and these are the objects about which they exercise their thoughts. But

now take a gracious man, he substantiates heaven by his forethoughts of it; if the breast of a gracious man were transparent, you would find a line drawn from his soul towards God. Herein is a great difference between these two sorts of men: there is an expression of Solomon, concerning the temper of a fool; (now Solomon's fool is the wicked man.) As "he thinketh in his heart, so he is." Prov. 23. 7. The thoughts of the soul discover most naturally the frame and temper of the heart. For the opening of this a little more, consider these four particulars in reference to our thoughts and meditation, and they will clear up the difference between a godly man, and one that yet is but in his natural state.

1. Consider this, that the thoughts whereby meditation is managed, are the immediate issues of the heart and therefore the best discoveries of a man. There are many interposing circumstances between our actions and our affections many times; but there is no interposition between the heart and the thoughts. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," (saith Christ.) Matt. 15. 19. He that would taste of the water of the sea, must take it up immediately from the sea, and not when it hath passed through the veins of the earth some miles; for so it loseth its brackishness. So he that would pass an estimate upon the state and frame of a man, must judge of his thoughts which immediately arise from the soul: for you cannot judge of him (many times) by his external actions. Therefore by what your continued meditation is upon, you may conclude your state good or bad.

2. They are the invisible productions of the soul; and that is another thing which makes them the better to discover our temper: they are neither subject to the knowledge, nor to the censure of the world; so that a man doth act most naturally in them. Fear and shame are two great checks and restraints from evil actions. Praise and interest are two great attractives to good actions, in reference to wicked men. Fear and shame restrain them from sin. Praise and interest excite them to good. But now thoughts are neither capable of these restraints, nor of those attractives; because they are not subject to the eye of the world. And this is the reason why many that dare not steal with the hand, yet dare steal with the eye; and so those that dare not defile another's body, yet dare pollute their own souls with

speculative wickedness, because their thoughts are invisible, not seen by the eye of the world; and this fortifies and strengthens this difference.

3. Our thoughts as they are the invisible productions of the soul, so they are the most delightful acts of the soul: our thoughts proceed from our affections; and therefore you may find the temper of the heart by them: and this is the reason why the different thoughts of men, stream forth in various and different ways. As a covetous man sets up an image of gold, and falls down and worships it in his thoughts, and this is very delightful and pleasing to him, because the world is his God. And thus pleasurable persons set up images of vanity, and these they look upon with the greatest delight and contentment; because pleasure is their God: so an ambitious man fancies echoes of praise, he hears the sound of his own glory; and this takes up his thoughts most delightfully and pleasingly, because honour is his God. Now a gracious heart looks upon things spiritual, as those chiefly that deserve his affections, for his thoughts run upon them.

4. Our thoughts are the continued acts of the soul. There is nothing so profuse in all the world as the soul of man; it is always spending of itself. The sun is not so full of beams, as the heart is of thoughts. Now where the temper of the soul is carnal, there is a vile expence of our thoughts upon base inferior objects; but where the soul is changed and renewed, there is a constant tendency of the soul towards God, there the thoughts by troops run up to heaven, and unbosom themselves in God. These are the refined acts of the soul, and therefore they do the most fully represent the difference that is between a carnal and a spiritual man. There are only these three cautions I will fix to this trial; possibly many of you may fancy yourselves changed upon this account, because sometimes you have good thoughts within you; therefore take three cautions to strengthen the trial.

(1.) Consider there is a difference between good thoughts that ascend from the frame of our heart; and those that are injected from without. For instance, a gracious man's holy thoughts ascend from the spiritual frame that is in his soul: but now a wicked man may have holy thoughts cast into him as a flash of lightning in the night, which doth not make a day; neither doth the injection of some holy thoughts, argue the frame of his

heart spiritual and holy. When he hath been hearing a warm sermon, then he thinks with himself, heaven deserves his choice and eager pursuits; this is but from without, and therefore doth not argue that he is spiritual. Paul calls thoughts the "counsels of our hearts:" 1 Cor. 4. 5. now when thy thoughts are the fruit of thy counsel; when thou dost determine to think of God, this argues the frame of thy spirit to be changed; but if it be merely an injection, thou mayest be in a natural state. I will illustrate it by its contrary; a gracious heart may have evil thoughts cast into him, there may be a rape committed upon his understanding; yet nevertheless he may not be a carnal person: so thou mayest have good thoughts cast into thee, yet this doth not arise from the frame and temper of thy soul. Bad thoughts may rush into a godly man, but they do not rest there: so good thoughts may be injected into wicked men, but pass away and are very transient, they do not arise from the frame of their hearts.

(2.) Consider whether these holy thoughts which sometimes are in thy soul, are cherished there as in their proper place and centre. In the 17th of Job v. 11. there is an expression concerning our thoughts, they are called "the possessions of our hearts;" for so the word signifies in the original, and so it is rendered in the margin of your bibles. Now have spiritual thoughts their residence there? Are they fixed there as in their natural soil? Are they in thy heart as meat in the stomach, which is received in its proper place, and so turned to food and nourishment? Good thoughts in a wicked man, are like wind in the bowels of the earth, which is never quiet till it hath made an eruption; or like thunder in a cloud, that breaks forth in violence.

(3.) Are these spiritual thoughts in thy heart, productive of holiness in thy life? then it is an argument the frame of thy soul is right: our thoughts are implicit words, and our actions are explicit thoughts; therefore if thou find the power of meditation in thy life, this is an argument, those thoughts which are in thy soul, are natural.

CHAP. VII.

A use of reproof. Carnal men reproved for their total neglect of meditation. And regenerate men for their too great disuse of it, and remissness in it: wherein they are guilty of unkindness to God, and disparagement of him.

FOR reproof, and that; to carnal and sensual men; to those that are truly gracious.

First, To the carnal and sensual sinner, that lives in a constant neglect of this spiritual duty of meditation. Oh it is a sad complaint, "God is not in all their thoughts:" consider with thyself, how many years thou hast lived in the world, and thy thoughts have been altogether strangers to heaven? Did God give unto thee that cabinet of thy understanding, either to keep it empty, or to treasure up in it only chaff or dung? Did God intend when he made thee a rational creature, that thou shouldst only spend thy thoughts either upon those things that are unprofitable, or those that are sinful? Certainly God had higher ends when he gave to thee a reasonable soul. To press the sense of this upon you: consider with yourselves the sinfulness of neglecting this duty of meditation; it degrades thee from that honour which God hath given thee in thy creation; it debaseth thee and maketh thee of the inferior rank of creatures. There is an excellent expression in the 92 Psalm, ver. 5. "O Lord how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep?" It follows in the 6th verse, "a brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this." Observe the expression, those persons that neglect this duty of spiritual meditation, and do not consider the works of God; degrade and reduce themselves into the order of beasts. A carnal man that looks only upon the form and figure of external things, hath no better apprehension of them then a brute hath: a brute looks upon them with as clear an eye, as a carnal wretch; he that looks upon the things of the world, as only made for his own end, and not for the glory of God; and he that neglects the consideration of spiritual things lives like a brute. A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a

fool consider this; so that there is a great deal of evil and sin in it. Consider further some of the heaviest judgments that are recorded in scripture, have been exercised for the sins of thoughts; you know the angels lost heaven for their aspiring thoughts; and the old world were consumed by the deluge for their unclean ones; therefore certainly the neglect of this duty, which consists in the exercise of thoughts is a very great sin. Thy evil thoughts are like young vipers, which destroy the mother that bare them; so thy evil thoughts will destroy thy heart which conceives them. At the last day one of the great parts of the account we must give to God, must be of our thoughts, Rom 2. 16. "when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Then there shall be a narrow inquest made of the thoughts of men; and those thoughts which thou esteemest as nothing in reference to the lightness of the sin that is committed by them, will be as numerous as the sand, and prove as weighty. You that content yourselves to spend days, weeks, and years without meditation: Oh you that spend your thoughts upon trivial vanities: consider, in hell your thoughts shall be your chief tormentors, then every thought shall be as a dagger or poniard to stab thy soul. The worm that never dies, implies the sad reflections of conscience upon your evil ways, and that is managed by your thoughts; those thoughts now that are the chief part of your sin, they shall then be the sharpest executioners: therefore turn the stream of your thoughts towards God.

Secondly. Those who are gracious, and have a principle of regeneration in them, they deserve reproof upon a double account: partly because they so much neglect this duty of meditation, and partly because they are so remiss in the performance of it.

1. They neglect and disuse this duty. That there are such large gaps, and strides between our performances of meditation, it should strike us with fear and sorrow. The most christians are apt to look upon meditation, and those other duties which are wholly spiritual, as melancholy interruptions of their peace and quiet, and thereupon are very backward in the discharge of them.

2. When we do perform them, how weak and how remiss are our thoughts? Our thoughts are like an arrow which is shot from a bow that is weakly bent, they will not reach their mark, they die in their very birth, and lose their life before they have

performed any thing. How should this fill us with sorrow? As it is with the pegs of an instrument, when you are winding them up they slip down between your fingers, and when you have raised them to a due pitch, they presently fall again; so it is with our thoughts in heavenly meditation; when we are raising them, they slide down; and when we have lifted them up in some measure, how soon do they fall to the earth again! This is a great sin and crime of a high nature. Consider first, what an unkind recompence is this to God, that you should spend your thoughts but seldom upon him? His thoughts were fixed from everlasting upon you, and will not you send up your thoughts for a short time to him? His thoughts are ever drawing forth towards you, and shall yours move seldom towards him? Psal. 40. 5. saith Daivid, "many O Lord my God are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts to us ward, they cannot be reckoned up in order to thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." He hath from eternity spent his thoughts upon you, and they are every moment going forth towards you; there should be a continual return of our thoughts to him. Nay he hath given his Son to you, and will you not give your thoughts to him? It is the most unkind recompence to neglect this duty of meditation.

3. Consider it is a real disparagement to God, when we shall turn our meditation from him to sinful objects. When we shall prefer carnal sweets before him. If the eye doth not abide upon the object, it is either because the object displeaseth, or because the eye is taken off by something that is better; so if our meditations are so fleeting and unsteady in reference to God, what is the reason? either God doth not please us, or something better that pleaseth us draws our eyes off from him; and this casts a real disparagement upon God. Oh that we should forsake the Fountain of Living Waters for broken cisterns, that can hold no water!

CHAP. VIII.

A use of exhortation. Frequency and constancy in meditation pressed upon holy men This is the best use of our understandings. An imitation of Christ's example. Wicked men's thoughts being so fixed on the world, should provoke us to it. Holy men have a divine nature disposing them to this duty. It is one of the best instruments of communion with God. And makes way for an abundant entrance into heaven.

BY way of exhortation. To all those that are truly gracious, let me press upon them, the constant and frequent discharge of the duty of meditation: and that I shall urge by these arguments.

First. Consider, this duty restores thy understanding to its primitive authority, it puts thy reason to the purest and best use; therefore thou shouldest be frequent and serious in the discharge of it. This is that which vindicates and rescues our understanding from its captivity to the flesh, and restores it from its prostitution to our senses; it refines our reason, it advanceth it. This should be a powerful argument to persuade you to the performance of it. Our thoughts are winged messengers, that are able to mount above the visible heavens, to go towards God himself. Now meditation is that duty that puts them to their best use: why should our thoughts inherit the curse of the serpent, to cleave to the earth, and feed upon ashes, when there is such a duty wherein we may exercise them? Therefore you that are christians should consider this, and accordingly should be excited to the discharge of this duty.

Secondly. Let me press this duty upon you from the example of the Lord Jesus. Psal. 16. 8. "I have set the Lord always before me." David speaks that concerning himself by way of type, it is spoken of the Lord Jesus principally as appears by Acts 2. 25. our Saviour Christ when he was upon the earth, he was in heaven, not only in regard of the residence of his Deity, but in respect of his thoughts and affections. The thoughts of Christ were as numerous as the stars, and they were all in order as the stars; they were all spiritual and heavenly. Now there

should be a conformity between the members and the head; it is the apostle's exhortation. "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ." Phil. 2. 5. Therefore as you desire to be conformed to him, so be frequent in the exercise of this duty.

Thirdly. Consider the example of wicked men, how their thoughts are all fixed upon the earth, and let this be a motive to you. Take but the covetous worldling, and what are his thoughts upon, but gainful contrivances, how he may recruit his estate, how those that deal with him may be losers, and he may be a winner? You may read it in the expression of the fool in the gospel, "I will pluck down my barns and build greater, &c." Luke 12. 28. These were his musings upon his bed, and thus doth a worldly person. If you come to a voluptuous person, what are his thoughts upon? He makes a supposition to serve instead of enjoying, and all his thoughts are spent upon this; how he may gratify his carnal senses, how he may make provision for the flesh. And if you come to a proud person, what are his thoughts bent upon? He dreams of a ladder, whereby he may climb up to the top of honour. Now shall carnal spirits spend the strength of their souls upon such perishing vanities; and will not you spend your thoughts upon God and Christ, and upon the things of eternity? Shall a wicked man by his meditations draw forth as it were the quintessence of earth; and shall not we extract for the good of our souls, the marrow of the promises and the sweetness of religion?

Fourthly. There is a divine nature conveyed to you, which disposeth you for this duty. Indeed it is no wonder that a carnal man is always meditating upon worldly things, for he hath only in him that which is conveyed from the first Adam. Now the first "Adam was of the earth, earthly." But a gracious soul hath a new nature: now that is an active principle, and enables the soul to spiritual things. This is the glory of the christian religion, that it changeth the thoughts of men; and whereas your papists mumble over their prayers by number, and your carnal persons, moral protestants are only conversant about the external acts of religion: regeneration changeth the frame of our thoughts, and maketh us to mount upwards. Gracious souls are disposed for it; what Christ spake concerning leaven in the gospel, it raiseth the meal and swells it: so when grace is put into thy soul, it insinuates itself into thy thoughts, into thy dis-

courses, into thy actions. Those that are regenerated can in some measure perform this duty naturally and easily; it is as easy for the flame to ascend, as for a stone to descend. A vine doth with as much ease produce grapes, as a thistle or a thorn doth prickles: and therefore thy heart may produce spiritual meditations, with almost as much ease as a carnal man shall produce sensual corrupt vile thoughts; if thou do not injure the divine nature, but exercise it in sending up holy thoughts towards God.

Fifthly. Consider that this duty of meditation, is one of the choicest instruments of our communion with God. Communion with God is managed by duties on our part, and by donatives on God's part: by the ascents of our minds to God, and by the descents of God to our minds. Now meditation is that duty whereby the soul doth mount upwards towards God. By meditation a christian is able to discourse with the inhabitants of the invisible world: by meditation he is able to walk with God, to eye God in all his ways: by meditation he is able to draw from God, those comforts which every attribute doth promise and bring forth to the soul. This is that great duty whereby we manage communion with him: and this know by the way, those christians which are most neglective of this duty, will find a sensible declination both in their affections and in their practice, because they neglect communion with God. For all the progress both of holiness and joy that we make, it is grounded upon our communion with him; and therefore the neglect of it will be a breach in our communion, and consequently will bring a dearth, both in respect of our graces and our comforts.

Sixthly. Consider by the serious performance of this duty, thou wilt procure for thy soul an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. Such a christian doth enter upon his inheritance by degrees; his thoughts and affections are forerunners, and as harbingers to take up those mansions of glory. So that as we read concerning the angel that appeared to Manoah in the book of Judges, he ascended up in the flame of the sacrifice: so it is with a christian, his meditation doth enkindle his affections, and then he ascends up in the flame of his affections unto God. Such a christian when he comes to die, changeth his place but not his company; for he was in heaven, when he was upon earth. The discharge of this duty would cause in our souls a

lower heaven, and therefore you should perform it with the greater care. Consider, what is the heaven of angels? It is this, they always behold the face of their heavenly Father; the constant and steady contemplation of God is the heaven of angels. Now meditation is that duty whereby we contemplate God. I confess there is this difference, while we are upon earth, we look upon God with an unsteady eye, as a man that holds an optic glass with a palsy hand; he looks upon the stars; but the glass is held so unsteady, that he cannot fully and fixedly look upon them: so we differ in degree of fruition, but not in the substance. The soul that hath conversed with God, and frequently walked with him, it will be no strange thing for him to die; for he hath been dead to the world before, his soul hath been in heaven in reference to his desires, before it comes to heaven in reference to its own substance.

To finish all, as you would desire to have real and solid arguments of the change of your state; so be serious and very strict in the discharge of meditation. The old nature like a root is always productive of carnal thoughts: the devil is the tiller and husbandman of the old heart, and he makes those fruits that grow of themselves, to be more productive. But now if thy nature be changed, there is a spiritual seed conveyed into thy soul, and the influences of heaven should make you fruitful: and as you desire that, be strict in this duty. Although the beams of the sun touch the earth, yet the body of the sun is fixed in its own orb and sphere: so let this be the frame of your souls, although you must converse with the world, yet let your thoughts, your desires, your joys, your affections be with God in heaven, while these external commerces you must have with the world, declare you to be on the earth.

CHAP. IX.

The foregoing rules exemplified in a meditation on the sufferings of Christ.

THAT which I design in the last place, is to reduce those rules which I gave for meditation to practice upon this subject, viz. The sufferings of Christ.

And first, one rule I laid down was to be as particular as you can, in reference to the nature and circumstances of the object you meditate upon. Accordingly,

First. Lay down a draught of Christ's sufferings, and present that to yourselves: he that shall trace the story of Christ from the cradle to the cross, will find it to be a continual crucifixion, his life was a passive action, his death an active passion. But I shall confine myself more particularly to that which was the Cotonis and the most eminent part of his sufferings, and therefore for the more particular setting this before you. I will propound the crucifixion of Christ as it respects his body;—The agonies and sortows of his spirit, which was the highest part of his sufferings. For the first of these, that which *respected his body*, the scripture takes notice of three eminent circumstances which belong to that. The ignominy, curse, misery of it.

1. The ignominy of his crucifixion: and if you look into the scripture, you shall find he was scorned in every one of his offices. As he was a king, so he was sceptred with a reed, and crowned with thorns. As he was a prophet, so they blinded him and bade him prophesy who smote him. As he was a priest they clothed him with a long robe, which was an emblem of that office. The ignominy of our Saviour's sufferings, respecteth the kind of his death, the place of his death, and the companions of his death; if you respect the kind of it; it was hanging on a tree, that death which rendered the person, and showed the fact to be abominable. If you respect the place of his death, he was not crucified in a corner, but upon the top of Mount Calvary, so that he was exposed to the view of the world. If you respect the companions of his death, they were the dregs and worst of

mankind, thieves and robbers: thus you see he that was the "glory of heaven," is made the "shame of earth;" and he who was the adoration of angels, is the scorn of sinful wretches.

2. The second circumstance is the curse of his death. The scripture doth assert this, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Gal. 3. 13. There was both a ceremonial and a moral curse in the death of Christ: the ceremonial curse was his hanging upon a cross: for the custom of the Jews was this, upon any notorious fact, the malefactor was first put to death, by stoning, or the like; and then his body was hanged up before the sun: so that the hanging of a person, was a kind of second death, and this the Lord Jesus endured. The moral curse likewise did concur to the death of the Lord Jesus, he bare the iniquity of us all.

3. The misery of it, which was inexpressible. Every part of Christ was a receptacle of pain: those deaths which are lingering, there is a slow pace in them, but a quick torment. So it was with the Lord Jesus, his hands, and his feet were nailed to the cross; they were those parts which were most distant from the vitals, and animal spirits, and so his death was an extended torture. Now by meditation the soul should represent this crucifixion of Christ to itself.

If you come to the *sufferings of his soul*, Christ had a real taste of the bitterness of the second death. He drank up the cup of horror, he endured the pains of hell, though not specie yet pondere; * though he did not endure the same in kind; yet he did in degree: though he did not suffer a local hell, yet he suffered a penal hell. Thus represent these things to your souls, by the help of meditation.

To gather up the sum. The gracious soul, when it would warm itself with the consideration of Christ's death; let it make itself a party in every passage of the story of his passion; and let the soul mix its affections with all the occurrences of it: as for example. First go to the garden, and there let thy soul consider the sweat that dropped from him, hear his groans, and see his agonies. Then follow him to the rulers and soldiers; and there consider all those actions of theirs, which contained the greatest scorn, slighting, and abuse of him. When the thorns

* See more of this in the Harmony of the Attributes, ch. 13.

are platted upon his head, let them pierce thy heart. Then go from the ruler's house to Mount Calvary, and let thy soul take up part of the cross; and when thou comest there let it be nailed to the cross, and bleed with love for thy Saviour. The soul by reflex acts is able in some degree, to produce same passion and sorrow, which it would produce if the object was visible to our bodily eye. Now there is none of you but fancy if you had a visible representation of Christ hanging upon the cross, expending his blood, bowing his head, sending forth his Spirit, this would affect you. By meditation represent this to the eye of thy soul, and Oh let it produce suitable passions and affections.

Another rule I gave you was this, when you meditate upon a spiritual subject do it by way of argument; considering the causes and effects of it: so here, consider the causes and effects of Christ's sufferings. The causes of his sufferings are two, the love of the Father, and the love of Christ: I know the sin of man was the occasion of it. There was *miseranda necessitas* a miserable necessity on our part, but the cause was *commiserans voluntas*, commiserating mercy on God's part.

1. To speak of the love of the Father. The scripture represents this to us as the original cause of Christ's death. "Herein God declared his love to us, that when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." * Rom. 5. 8.

2. The love of Christ was the cause of this. Acts of grace cannot be extorted. Now this was merely an act of grace in Christ to give up himself to die for us. Therefore you find in the first treaty that was between God and Christ, Christ declares an absolute resignation to the will of God, "Lo I come to do thy will, O my God." Heb. 10. 7. Obedience to his Father and love to man, was the cause of Christ's sufferings. Therefore although the death of Christ was violent in respect of men, it was voluntary in respect of himself: "I lay down my life." Observe a vast difference between Christ's answer to Peter, and his answer to Judas; when Peter out of an irregular pity to Christ's person, desired him to favour himself; because that hindered man's redemption, he saith, "get thee behind me satan." John 10. 15. Mat. 16. 23. Mat. 26. 50. How

* See more of this in the Harmony of the Attributes, chap. 9, throughout, but especially towards the end.

sharp and severe was it? But when Judas comes to betray Christ, he calls him friend. What a great difference is there in the answers of Christ? This shows the willingness of his compliance with his Father's decrees; the love of Christ was the cause of his sufferings; that love which was as ancient as his Deity, and survived his humanity.

In the second place, let us proceed to the effects of these sufferings, and that will be an object fit for our meditation. There are five eminent effects of Christ's sufferings, which the scripture speaks of.

1. Complete satisfaction to the justice of his Father. The sufferings of Christ were enriched by the union of his Deity; his blood was the blood of God: it was more for a God to satisfy, than for a man to sin. The violation of the law, was an act of the creature; but the fulfilling of the law was an act of the Creator; and therefore justice is completely satisfied. Upon this account Rev. 4. 3. we read that the throne of God, is encompassed with a rainbow. A rainbow is an emblem of peace. The justice of God receives more glory in the redemption of our souls, than in the damnation of the world. For Christ at once made full satisfaction, but all the damned souls in hell are ever satisfying. You know a payment may be made of equal value in a small weight of gold, which is equivalent to a greater weight of silver; Christ's blood and sufferings although they were short in respect of their time and duration; yet they did exceed the eternal torments of the damned in respect of the worth of his person.

2. The second effect of Christ's sufferings is, laying a foundation for the calming and quieting of conscience. Conscience is God's officer, and when the Judge is appeased, conscience then should suspend its accusations; the blood of Christ may well be called spiritual wine, for it doth at once cheer the heart of God by way of satisfaction, and the heart of man by way of pacification. Conscience cannot alledge any thing, but what may be answered from the death of Christ. I confess many times believing souls are full of perplexities; for the bee that hath lost her sting, may keep a noise and buz, although it cannot injure us: so when sin hath lost its sting by his death, yet there may be a noise about us, and this may trouble us; but this proceeds not from the weakness of Christ's satisfaction, but from the weakness of our faith.

3. The third effect of Christ's death is this, the powers of darkness are broken by it. He that had power of death, the devil is now made an object of triumph. The devil thought he might get a complete victory when Christ suffered, but Christ tells us, "Now is the prince of this world judged." John 16. 11. Death itself that is our last enemy was destroyed by the death of Christ. And this was the reason why, when Christ died, many saints rose up and lived again in Jerusalem, to declare to us death was conquered. And at the last day the grave shall give up its spoil, by virtue of Christ's death.

4. The fourth effect of Christ's death is this, the crucifixion of sin. Therefore the scripture tells us, the old man is crucified with him. Sin brought Christ to the cross, and Christ brought sin to the cross and nailed it there. Herein appears the admirable wisdom of God, that as sin brought in death, so the death of Christ should carry out sin, I mean in reference to believers.

5. The inheritance of glory is the fruit and effect of Christ's death. The blood of Christ, ratifies the New Testament. It is the key of paradise, and opens heaven for us: there was such an exuberancy in the merits of Christ; such a supererogation of worth, that not only satisfied for us, but purchased an inheritance for us. Whereas the first Adam had an earthly paradise; the second Adam purchased for us an everlasting state of glory: this is another medium, whereby you may exercise the duty of meditation in your souls.

Thirdly. Another rule I laid down was this, when you do consider of any objects, amplify them by way of comparison, and that either by way of similitude or dissimilitude; do so as to the sufferings of Christ.

1. If you take the sufferings and amplify them by way of comparison. But there is nothing in the creation, that is a fit subject fully to represent them by: I shall therefore make a parallel (as the scripture doth) between the death and crucifixion of Christ for us, and the death and killing of sin within us. The death of Christ was a real death, and so should the death of sin be: many times in the bodies of men, there is an interruption of the vital and animal spirits; so that some one part of the body, is as it were dead; as in those that lie under palsies and the like; but it is not a real death, till the soul be separated from the body: there was a real separation between the soul and

the body in Christ; so there should be between sin and us. The death of Christ was a sharp and dolorous death; so we should exercise a holy severity against sin: we should not allow any indulgence to our lusts. The death of Christ was a gradual and a lingering death: so should we condemn our sins too, that since we cannot kill them at once, yet they should die by degrees.

2. By dissimilitude. The scripture hath an eminent instance, 1 Pet. 1. 18. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things" (observe the dissimilitude) "as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ." Take all the treasures of the world, although we deify them they cannot free one soul; it was only the sacred treasures of heaven the blood of the Lord Jesus that was able to free us from the wrath to come. Indeed the consideration of Christ's blood stains all the glory of the world, and impoverisheth the richest splendour of the whole universe.

Another rule which I propounded to you was to meditate on a spiritual subject by way of emission or ejaculation of your souls to God, and that two ways. 1. By way of complaint. 2. By way of desire.

1st. Let the soul send forth itself to God by way of complaint of its insensibility of these suffering of Christ. Did the whole creation bear a share with the Lord Jesus in his sufferings, and shall our hard hearts be insensible? when the Son of God was debased, the sun of the world was darkened and eclipsed, and durst not show its glory. 'The whole world (as I may so speak) was hung with mourning,' in reference to the sufferings of Christ; and shall our souls be insensible of these sufferings? The veil of the temple was rent, and shall not our hearts? Impress these considerations. The creature that was not the cause of Christ's death and sufferings, sympathized with him, and shall man who was the cause neglect and despise them? Christ shed drops of blood, and shall not we spend hearty sighs? How should we thus complain of ourselves to the Lord, concerning the hardness of our hearts.

2dly. By way of desire, and that in two respects, when we meditate upon the death of Christ. 1. That we may have an interest in those sufferings. 2. That we may feel the sensible fruit of them.

(1.) That we may have an interest in these sufferings. It is not a naked contemplation, but the implantation of our souls into Christ's death, that makes it effectual to us. There were many that did see the ark, yet lost their lives, because they were without it. So many may have an historical knowledge, yet because they are not united to Christ, they receive no benefit: therefore beg that God would implant thee into that likeness of Christ's death, that he would unite thee to the Lord Jesus. Remember possession follows union. Christ's garments only cover Christ's members; therefore let thy desires be excited after an interest in him;

(2.) That you may feel the sensible fruits and benefits of those sufferings of Christ. And here the soul should send forth its desires to God. Oh that my sins might feel the vinegar and the gall! Oh that they were nailed to the cross of Christ! Oh that I might find the fruits of the cross! Oh that his pains might produce peace to my soul! Thus the heart of a gracious person should send forth his desires to God.

Another rule I gave you for the managing the duty of meditation, was by way of impression upon our own souls, and that likewise in a double manner. 1. By way of charge. 2. By way of restraint. Do so as to the sufferings of Christ.

1. By way of charge. After the soul hath warmed itself with the meditation of them, let it impress upon itself these three things by way of charge. To exercise faith; to inflame its love; and to enliven its obedience.

To exercise its faith. Thus let the soul of a christian reflect upon itself: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" Psal. 42. 5. Why dost thou fear the punishment of sin, when guilt is taken away? Why art thou tossed to and fro with anxious fears and perplexities? Consider the Lord Christ hath died; and this is that which makes the apostle to cry victory over all our spiritual enemies. There are two things which usually do weaken the trust of believers. One is the greatness of their sins, the other is the weakness of their faith. Now the sufferings of Christ answer both these. For the greatness of thy sins propose this; our sins are but finite acts, and therefore cannot preponderate his infinite righteousness. Oh consider, thy sin is infinite indeed in respect of the object; but the righteousness of Christ is infinite in respect of

the subject: certainly the obedience of God is more available to reconcile us, than the disobedience of man was to make an enmity between God and us. Consider thus with thyself, if thou hadst always lived in a spotless innocency, thou wouldst not then be afraid of God: yes, but the righteousness of Christ exceeds the natural robe of thine innocency. If the angels may always look upon the face of God, who are only clothed with their natural righteousness; certainly a believer may who is clothed with the righteousness of Christ. That blood is able to redeem ten thousand worlds.

Suppose thy trust is taken off by reason of the weakness of thy faith, thou fearest thy faith is not strong enough. The meditation of Christ's sufferings will answer that; for impress this upon thy soul. The price is the same and the acceptation of God is the same, both in reference to a strong faith and a weak faith. A weak eye that looked upon the brazen serpent, was an instrument to cure the body as well as a strong eye. The wings of a dove may carry it over the river, as well as the wings of an eagle; and a weak faith may lay hold on the righteousness of Christ, as well as the strong, and embrace it. Oh remember, the strongest faith is not the purchaser of our salvation; and therefore when thy faith is weak, yet encourage thyself by considering the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

2. By way of check and restraint. When ever you find your souls tempted to sin, let this allay the heat of the temptation; and let the consideration of Christ's sufferings repel all those fiery darts. Let me allude to that of David, when the water of Bethlehem was brought to him, which was purchased by the hazard of men's lives, saith he, "Shall I drink the blood of these men? And he poured forth the water before the Lord." When ever thy soul is tempted to sin, then argue thus; shall that, that was his sorrow, be my joy? Sin was the spear that opened his side, and the nails that pierced his hands. Sin is that which makes every person to be a Judas to betray him; a Pilate to condemn him and soldiers to crucify him. And shall we thus again crucify the Lord Jesus? Shall we add sorrow to sorrow? This is one of the most noble and powerful means to restrain and check the soul, whenever the temptations of sin are strong and vigorous upon thee.

To conclude, the sum of what I would say is this. In this meditation of the death of Christ, let the duty be,

Serious, Affectionate, Applicative, Practical.

First. Serious. It is an expression of the apostle, "Consider the Lord Jesus;" let not your views be transient sudden glances, which do no good; but represent the Lord Jesus before your eyes in a serious and solemn manner. And you that are to come to the sacrament have an advantage of others: kings do many times represent their own persons in the broad seal; they sit upon a throne sceptred and the like: so Christ in the sacrament (which is the seal of heaven) represents his own person. There is only this difference, the picture of a king is a dead representation: but the Lord Christ in the sacrament is most livelily and efficaciously represented to the soul.

Secondly. Let it be an affectionate view. Let your affections correspond with the Lord Jesus Christ in all the passages of his sufferings. If that argument will not break us, the flames of hell will melt us. Always make reflections upon yourselves, and consider that you were the invisible crucifiers of Christ.

Thirdly. Let your meditation be applicative, always make an impression upon your souls. The generality of people look upon the death of Christ as the death of a martyr, and not as a Mediator; only as the death of an innocent person, that suffered without cause; therefore they spend their declamations against the Jews, the soldiers, and Pilate; but vain persons they never reflect upon their own hearts, they do not apply it to their own souls. Consider it is not the blood of Christ, as it was shed upon the cross; but as sprinkled on thy heart that saves thee; and therefore make application of it when ever thou meditatest upon the sufferings of Christ.

Fourthly. Let thy meditation be practical, reduce it to obedience. Oh this is to realize it in our thoughts; when we live as those that feel the influences and power of Christ's death in our souls; when we find our hearts thereby to be enlivened in the duties of holiness, and our corruptions to wither and decay and fall before us, then it is that we meditate aright upon the death of the Lord Jesus.

Take this as an encouragement. Those that thus make application of Christ as crucified; shall hereafter be conformed to Christ as glorified. Those that now feed upon his body in the sacrament by faith, shall hereafter feed upon his face by sight and vision, for ever and ever.

ON THE

FEAR OF GOD.

JOB XXVIII. 28.

And unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

IF you look back to the twelfth verse, you shall find an inquiry made after wisdom; and in the following verses, there is a description of the wisdom of God's providence, whereby he doth marshal and rank the innumerable sorts of creatures that are in the world. This wisdom of providence directs us to the wisdom of the law: this world being the school of rational spirits, every part of it, every creature, reads unto us a lecture of divinity. But the question is, what is that voice, that is conveyed to us by all these things; the answer is, "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." If you look into this great volume, the book of the creatures, which is written within and without, written within with invisible essences, the angels, &c. written without with corporeal substances, all the visible objects of nature; and if you would know what is God's design in all these, it is this, that man should learn to fear him, that being the chiefest wisdom, and to depart from evil, that being the most eminent understanding. This is the connexion of the words. In that part, which at the present, I in-

tend to prosecute and treat of, you may observe first the subject, The fear of the Lord. Secondly, The predicate, that is wisdom.

The doctrine which I shall insist on is this, the fear of God is eminently wisdom.

I. Now in the opening of the first head, the fear of God, we will consider,

i. The nature of God's fear.

ii. The objects upon which it is terminated.

iii. Distinguish it from that degenerate fear that is in wicked men.

iv. Show you the products and effects of it.

v. Speak concerning those seeming contrary graces to which it is united, as faith, love, hope and joy, &c.

vi. Answer some questions, how far, and in what manner the threatenings of the word should work upon the fear of a converted person.

vii. And then exhort you to this fear of God.

CHAP. I.

The nature of the fear of God.

I. HEAD of discourse, The fear of God.

i. The nature of it. The fear of God in scripture is sometimes taken more generally, and so it imports the whole circle of divine duties, and of religious worship. Thus it is said, Eccl. 12. 13. "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." And the reason why fear is thus taken, is partly because the fear of God hath an influx upon all the duties of godliness, it being, (if I may so speak) the præpositus that guides and orders them, and therefore it may well be

put for the whole service that we owe to our Creator; and partly, because the fear of God is an eminent piece of godliness, one of the prime parts of God's service. As an artificer receives his title from that work about which he is most conversant. Upon this account it is, you shall find in scripture, sometimes a godly man is described by his fear. Job was a man "fearing God;" and so "blessed is the man that feareth God," which is the description of a gracious person.

2. This fear of God is taken in a more restrained and limited sense, and so the fear of God imports, that sanctified affection and sanctifying grace, whereby the soul doth solemnly and reverently reflect upon God's perfections, and from thence is moved in all things to promote God's honour.

CHAP. II.

The objects of the fear of God.

II. NOW this fear will be further opened to you, if you consider its objects, which are the perfections of God; and those I shall present to you in this order.

1. The majesty of God, which appears in the works of nature and providence. There is a beam of God's glorious essence, which shines forth in all the parts of the creation, that should draw forth our fear. The firmament over our heads is so great a body, that the earth is but a prick or a point, if compared with it; yet that vast heaven, nay the heaven of heavens, cannot contain God. This discovery of his majesty, and of his immensity, should draw forth our fear, "who would not fear thee thou King of nations?" When you look down and consider that vast collection of waters that is in the sea; and that God by one word, doth bound the raging seas, that he swathes them with a

girdle of sand, as a nurse doth a little infant; this should fill the soul with a religious awe. The thunder is God's voice, whereby he summons the world to dread and reverence him; nay (as little as you think of it) the very clouds, which are the water-pots of heaven, when they descend upon the earth, should move our fear: for God saith by the prophet, "will you not fear me, that send the former and the latter rain?" Jer. 5. 24. All the works of the creation should draw forth this grace. And certainly he that shall but consider with himself that expression of scripture, that "man is but a worm, and the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers," &c. and make a comparison between God and himself; between God's majesty, and man's meanness, if then he doth not fear God, he acteth below his duty.

2. The purity of God is the object of our fear. This (which is revealed in its glory in heaven) causeth the holy angels, and glorified saints, to pay the tribute of reverence to God for ever, Isa. 6. 1, 2, 3. There you shall find the prophet's vision of the Lord sitting upon a throne high, and his train lifted up, filling the temple. The seraphims stood about him, and they cried out and said, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." They had a sight and view of God's holiness; and what is the effect of it? "They had six wings, with twain they covered their faces," as being unworthy to behold the glory of God's holiness; and "with twain they covered their feet," as being unworthy to be beheld by that holy God; and "with two they did fly." Rev. 15. 4. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy?" He that doth not fear God's majesty, I told you he acts below his duty; but he that doth not fear God's purity, doth not consider his sins. Because we have narrow thoughts of God's holiness, therefore we fear him so little. If our understandings were clarified so far, as to see the immaculateness of his purity, we should then fear him more. When the Lord Jesus Christ made a small discovery of his divinity, in a miracle, Peter presently falls down, and cries out, "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Luke 5. 8. Purity and majesty conjoined, strike a sinner into consternation.

3. Another object of our fear is God's all seeing eye, Psal. 16. 8. "I have set the Lord always before me," how? I have set

him before me as my inspector, as my guide, as my pattern, and this doth raise and excite fear towards God. There is a pure and a piercing eye that looks upon our most retired actions. There is nothing that is a more powerful motive to a man to walk as a christian than this, a certain persuasion that God's eye is always open upon him. There is no person that is any thing in religion, till the fear of God be written upon all his actions. We read Deut. 23. 14. God commanded the Israelites, that "there should be no unclean thing in the camp, for the Lord walked in the midst of the camp." Oh when you do but apprehend this, that the eye of God is always upon you, and make this the object of your fear, the influx of it will be powerful for the regulating of your lives. Sometimes in scripture, the fear of God is opposed to forgetfulness of him.

4. The power of God is also an object of our fear, for this makes him a dreadful adversary, Psal. 90. 11. "who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." It is impossible for the most trembling conscience to enlarge its apprehensions, and its fears answerable to the power of God's anger. You know that a trembling conscience is able to fancy to itself the most direful torments; the pouring out of hot oil into the tenderest parts of the body; whatever torments either the power or the art of man can do: but our apprehensions are finite and limited, and when you have raised them to the utmost extent, they cannot reach any degree as it were of God's power. The power of the creatures is a limited power; for as they have a limited benignity, and can do us good but in part, so likewise they have but a limited malignity to do us hurt but in part; as you know there are some things that can clothe us, but not feed us; some things can heal us, but not defend us from injuries: so on the contrary, fire may burn us, but it cannot drown us; a serpent may sting us, but not tear us. But now the power of God's anger is such, that it doth eminently contain in it all sorts, all degrees of torment; as the light of the sun doth eminently contain in it all the torches and candles in the world, and therefore who would not fear, as the treasures of his wrath, so the power of it. "Fear him," saith Christ, "who is able to cast soul and body into hell." And by the way, know the great reason why men do so much fear the great ones of the earth, and so little fear the God of heaven is

this, because we fancy to ourselves a large power in a mortal creature, and have dark apprehensions of the infinite power of the immortal God. The sinful compliance which abounds so much in the world, proceeds from this, because men fear the anger of the creature, but they presume on the mercy of God, and fear the justice (as they call it) of man, but they hope in the goodness of God.

5. The justice of God is another object of our fear. This attribute excites his power, awakens his wrath, and causeth them to sparkle forth against sinners. Now this is the ground of our fear, as we are guilty creatures. All those attributes which I have already mentioned, produce fear in us in respect of the contrary qualities that are in us, as the majesty of God causeth our fear in respect of our meanness, his purity in respect of our vileness, his power in respect of our weakness, and so his justice in respect of our guilt, for we are guilty creatures. The love that we exercise upon God, respects him as a Father; but the fear that we fix upon God is referred to him as a Judge; and if we do but seriously take a view of God's justice as it is represented in the word, it is impossible but that the most presumptuous spirit would be filled with trembling and horror at the apprehension of it; that justice that will take notice of the number and of the quality of all our sins; that justice that will spare no person be he never so great, nor slight any person be he never so mean; that justice that shall award and decide our everlasting state, who would not fear it? Alas, the justice of man be it never so severe, can but dispose of a few days, or a few years of our time; but the justice of God doth award us for ever to glory, or to misery.

6. The mercy of God and his goodness are the objects of our fear. Take this as a rule, the affections of a man are best discovered by his reflection on mercy. The presuming sinner will argue from it thus; there is mercy in God, therefore I may encourage myself in my evil ways, and I may offend him; but the gracious soul argues thus, there is mercy with God, therefore I will fear him. Now if you ask me how can a person fear God's mercy, I answer (1.) An ingenuous soul fears to displease it; (2.) He fears to lose it.

(1.) He fears to displease it. *Timor castus, timor filii, timor gratus.* It is a chaste, a filial and a grateful fear, whereby the

soul is very tender of displeasing the mercy of God. It is that fear which a child bears to a parent, which a wife bears to her husband, which one friend bears to another, he would not displease him. Oh remember there is a dread in God's smiles, and his majesty is to be feared when it is most serene.

(2.) The soul fears the loss of that mercy. For as a gracious spirit prizeth the mercy of God more than life, so it fears the loss of it more than death, Psal. 63. 3. " thy loving-kindness is better than life;" and thus St. Austin describes fear, it is *fuga animæ, ne perdat quod diligit*, the flight of the mind, lest one lose what he enjoys. If you have tasted how good the Lord is, there will be a fear lest you should hazard the smallest degree of the manifestation of it.

CHAP. III.

The difference between servile and filial fear.

iii. I proceed next to distinguish between servile and filial fear; between that fear that is degenerate and slavish, and that which is ingenuous and filial. The Latins distinguish these two sorts of fears by two words, the one is called *metus*, the other is called *timor; metus* is the fear which respects an object, that may be injurious to me. *Timor* being derived from a word which signifies honour, imports a reverence of another, because of his excellencies. One of these is that fear which is slavish, and the other genuine and filial: now there are several distinctions which I shall present to you of those two fears, that so you may be able to judge whether you are a partaker of this grace or no: you know there are many noxious weeds which are very like to garden herbs; but although they be like in appearance, yet the operations of them are very different. So there is a similitude

between this fear of God, and that slavish fear which is in a carnal spirit; yet they are vastly different in their effects.

1. The fear that is slavish, is a forced act, but that which is ingenuous is voluntary. A slavish fear proceeds from a judicial impression, stamped upon the conscience; and so he that lies under it makes it his design to break the chains, and get himself at liberty; but this son-like fear is the desire of a saint, Nehem. 1. 11. "we desire to fear thy name," it is the treasure of a saint, Isa. 33. 6. "the fear of the Lord is his treasure." It is that to which he devotes himself, Psal. 119. 33. "thy servant who is devoted to thy fear." The fear of a wicked man is a judicial impression; for when the spirit of bondage strikes upon the conscience, then it is filled with fears and terrors. But now the fear of a gracious person, proceeds from himself, he takes the threatenings of God and endeavours to awe his own soul therewith, 2 Cor. 5. 10. "knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men;" and this is the reason why a carnal spirit, (one that hath this slavish fear in him,) his great design is to break the fetters of conscience, to loose those ties, he would fain get out of that troublesome state. But now a gracious spirit always cherisheth this fear of God: he labours to know God more, that he may fear him more. And this is the reason likewise that this slavish fear is in such a soul only at some times, there are sometimes violent impressions of conscience, some zealous pangs which move the soul; and these persons are just like the marble pillars that will sweat in moist weather, but retain their hardness still: whereas a gracious fear is not a violent passion, but a serious constitution of spirit. Oh such a man fears God always, and this (by the way) is one difference between the grace of love, and the grace of fear; love is that grace, that when we exercise it, the soul spends itself in violent ejaculations towards God. Therefore in its raptures it cannot be always in us; although there is a love burning in the soul always, yet not a love flaming always, that cannot be: but now the fear of God is a grace, which you must exercise every moment so far as it is possible.

2. That fear that is degenerate and servile, doth merely arise from guilt. Guilt first brought fear into the world; when Adam was convicted of his disobedience, then he feared and hid himself. See an eminent example of this, Acts 24. 25. When the

apostle Paul was called before the governor Felix, you shall find the prisoner at the bar, by the help and advantage of conscience, made the governor to tremble. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled." But now a gracious soul, his fear doth not arise merely from guilt, but it is a fear of reverence in reference to God's perfections, it ariseth from the knowledge of God's excellency, it shall continue in heaven itself, when we are confirmed in glory; when there will not remain the least degree of guilt, then shall we most fear God. As I have read a story of a person of most eminent holiness when he was a dying, he was filled with great tremblings and fears of God; there comes one to him and speaks to him, I wonder (saith he) that you who know God do so fear him? 'If I did know him more, I should fear him more;' that was his dying answer. In heaven the fear of God shall be perfected; therefore it doth not merely arise from guilt. When God is pleased to dart a fire into the bones of a man, to cast stings into his conscience, then a carnal man fears; when his heart is scorched with the estuations of those lusts wherein formerly he delighted himself (as a fish sometimes is boiled in that very water that formerly it sported itself in) then doth a carnal spirit fear. But now a gracious man when there is peace within, when there is a blessed serenity in the conscience, then he fears the Lord; therefore it is said, "the churches walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," Acts 9. 13. there you see an union between fear and joy.

3. This degenerate and servile fear respects the dismal effects of sin, but not its evil nature. They in whom this is *non metuunt peccare, sed metuunt ardere*, they do not fear to sin, but they fear to burn; or if they fear sin, it is merely in reference to burning. The one is *timor pœnæ*, the other is *timor offensæ*, the one fixeth itself on the punishment, the other regards the offence; the one is awakened by the apprehension of those judgments to which a man is exposed, the other regards the evil which a man hath done. A child may fear to take up a burning coal, that doth not fear to take up a black coal, which will soil and pollute it. A carnal wretch fears to meddle with that sin that will create terrors in his conscience, but is not afraid to meddle with that sin which will defile him. The wise man speaking concerning this gracious fear, calls it, "the fear of the

commandment," Prov. 13. 13. "but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded." I deny not but servile fear may give a check to our sins; but this doth not proceed from any hatred of sin, but from fear of hell. To illustrate this by a similitude, a dog although his ravenous nature do prompt him to take hold of the meat, yet when the staff is over his head he dares not touch it. A wicked man while terrors of conscience are upon him, though he loves his sin, yet he dares not venture upon it. What epicure is there that is such a slave to his appetite, that when he is under a fit of the stone, will venture on those meats that he knows will increase his paroxysm, and make his pains more dolorous? and yet he may love the meat very well: so it is here, such a person that hath this slavish fear, although he loves his sin, yet he may possibly be kept from it for fear of hell, but this fear is terminated only upon the punishment.

4. Another difference between these fears is drawn from the continuance of them; this servile fear usually being a sudden passion, but the ingenuous fear is a serious constitution of spirit. I shall apply to this purpose that which Aristotle speaks concerning the colours of men; there are some colours which proceed from complexion, there are others which proceed from some sudden passion. Suppose the question be, what complexion a man is of; if he be pale through fear, or red for anger, we cannot say that man is of a pale or red complexion, because that is a sudden thing: it is just so here, one that is a carnal wretch, sometimes when there are sharp pangs of conscience upon him, he may fear to sin; but this fear remains no longer than the paroxysm of the burning ague, it may be not so long, for some few hours only; but the gracious spirit always maintains this fear in him, "blessed is the man that feareth always;" the one is but a sudden passion, the other is the complexion of the soul.

5. They vastly differ in their excitations to that which is good, and that in two respects. (1.) In respect of the extent of that good, to which carnal fear doth excite a man. (2.) In respect of the manner of performance.

(1.) In respect of the extent of that good. He that is a slave, and fears God servilely, his fear prompts him but to such a degree of good as he judgeth to be absolutely necessary for his own peace; such a person will give God but gold-weight; he

will not perform those duties to which natural conscience by some spear or goad doth not excite him. But the fear that is ingenuous and filial, excites the soul to a more liberal degree of service; therefore it is said, 2 Cor. 7. 1. "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." So Phil. 2. 12. "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Now reduce this to your particular state, and make an inquiry, whether the fear that you bear towards God, doth only excite you to some duties which the very light of natural conscience discovers and commands; or whether or no, doth it engage your hearts to all the duties of holiness?

(2.) In respect of the manner of performance. This is the usual temper of servile fear, it excites a man to the bare act of the duty, without regard to those qualities which should attend that act and that duty. Thus he that is a slave and fears God merely for his wrath, possibly he will pray and hear the word; but his prayers are but a little motion of the lips, they are spiritless devotions. He prays like a parrot, without a correspondency of his affections to that which he prays; and what is the reason of it? Because natural conscience is quiet for the act done. Whereas an ingenuous fear, causeth the soul, in prayer, to labour that it may be in a flame, and endeavour to raise the affections to the highest pitch and degree. He that fears as a slave, though he makes God the object of his duty, he doth not make him the end of his duty. And therefore saith the Lord, "when you fasted, did you fast unto me?" Zech. 7. 5. But this is the end of their duties, to quiet conscience, that all might be peaceable within. But ingenuous fear excites the soul to perform duties in such a manner, as may be acceptable to the Father of spirits.

6. These fears differ in their restraints from evil, and that likewise in a double respect. (1.) In respect of the nature of those evils from whence they are restrained. (2.) In respect of the manner of their flight from them.

(1.) In respect of the nature of those evils from which they are restrained. Servile fear checks the soul from those black sins which stare in the face of a natural conscience, those sins which are of the first magnitude, and of a crimson dye, which do *vastare conscientiam*, waste the conscience, these sins slavish fear will keep a man from; but for other sins, which (although

they do not leave so great a blot upon the name, yet they may leave a very great stain upon the soul) they do not regard. To give you an instance; a natural man that lies under this slavish fear, fears to kill a man, but not to hate or bear a spleen against a man; and yet this is murder in a degree. Such a man fears actually to defile himself with a woman; but he cherisheth speculative wantonness, and gazeth on the image of the lust, it may be whole days in his fancy; and yet this is the adultery of the heart, but this he doth not regard: but where there is an ingenuous fear, this causeth a person not only to fly sin, but the appearance of it, to fly the smallest sin as well as the greatest; for as there is the same reason of the roundness of a ball, as there is of a globe, so there is the same reason he should fly the smallest sin as the greatest. Thus an ingenuous child fears not only visible disobedience, but declines the very colour of it. A chaste wife doth not only fear to break the marriage knot, but flies every sign of disloyalty, and will not bring upon herself the least suspicion of her chastity; so that in respect of the nature of the evils declined, there is a vast difference.

(2.) In respect of the manner of their flight: for that fear which is degenerate and servile, although it may withdraw the soul from the action, it doth not crucify the affection to sin; but now a gracious spirit doth not only forbear sin, but abhor it; he doth not only leave it, but loath it. In the one the faculties are bridled up, in the other the will is healed; the one doth *abscondere* hide his sin, and keeps himself from outward acts; but the other doth *abscindere*, he cuts off sin by the roots.

7. Servile fear drives a man from God, but filial fear unites a man to God. He that is a slave, his great care is how he may hide himself from God; but he that is a son his great care is, that God do not hide himself from him. A slave is afraid to find God, a son is afraid lest he should lose him. St. Austin doth admirably explain this by the different fear the harlot hath of her husband, from that which the wife hath, who is loyal and virtuous. The harlot saith he, *illa timet ne veniat*, she fears lest her husband should come home; but the virtuous wife *illa timet ne deserat*, she fears lest he should depart. The harlot fears lest her husband should chastise her, but the virtuous wife lest he should forsake her. Thus it is here, he that is a slave all his design is this, how he may hide himself from God; but a

gracious soul doth less fear God's blows, than his absence, he can better brook his strokes than the withdrawing of his countenance.

8. Servile fear is an earnest of hell; filial fear is the beginning of heaven. Servile fear is the fruit of the covenant of works, and therefore the beginning of sorrow. Filial fear is the product of the covenant of grace; for saith the Lord, "my fear I will plant and put in their hearts," and so it is the initials of glory. Servile fear is one of the black train of affections that shall accompany sinners to another world; all the bright part of their affections shall leave them, their joy, their hope, and their delight; but their fear, sorrow, despair and horror, shall accompany them for ever: but now the fear of God which is son-like and ingenuous, that doth endure for ever, that shall be completed in glory. There are some graces in a saint that are relative graces, that respect the present state, as repentance and the justifying faith of a saint; but the fear of God, that is the eternal homage and tribute which the creature must pay to him, and therefore it shall continue for ever.

CHAP. IV.

The effects and products of filial fear.

iv. IT was next propounded to show what are the effects and products of filial fear; they are these,

1. The fear of God produceth a flight from sin: this is so essential to the fear of God, that it makes up its description, the fear of God is to depart from evil. In the 19th Psalm ver. 9. you have an expression there, "the fear of the Lord is clean;" it is clean *formaliter*, it is clean in itself; it is clean *effective*, as it makes us clean; that person that thus fears the Lord will

not ordinarily neglect the least duty, nor commit the least sin for the greatest good. The fear of God is *animæ vigil & custos*, it is the sentinel and guard of the soul, which is very vigilant that no temptation may enter in, nor no corruption may pass out.

2. Another effect or product of this fear of God, is a careful search after the perfect knowledge of God's will, that so a man may not offend him, (and this proceeds from the former) Psal. 86. 11. "teach me thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in thy truth, unite my heart to fear thy name." Here you see the conjunction of these two requests. A man that is a stranger to this fear, makes it his design to preserve his conscience from the command of the light of the word. Lazy persons lie upon their beds of ease, and draw their curtains that no beam may dart in upon them; they are afraid of the shining light, lest it should scorch them; they are afraid conscience should know what is the will of God lest it should perform its office of accusing them: but one that fears God ingenuously, he tries what is the acceptable and good will of God. Thus it was with Job, chap. 34. 32. "that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity I will do no more." This is the temper of a person that fears God; and indeed you may carry this through all relations. This is the fear of a son, who will inquire what is his father's will that he may not displease him. The care of a wife is this, she will inquire what her husband's disposition is, that she may not contradict him: it is a necessary effect of fear to make a person full of inquiries after the will of him whom he endeavours to please.

3. This fear hath a great influence upon our performance of the duties of worship. (1.) It composeth the soul. (2.) It makes it awful in the discharge of them.

(1.) It composeth the soul, Psal. 86. 11. "unite my heart to fear thy name." There is a natural lightness in the spirits of men, and when we come to religious duties our thoughts are like a bird in a cage, it flutters the more because it is inclosed; our thoughts then are full of such a light discurrency as chaff in the wind, or dust in the air; but now the fear of God binds up the soul from flitting. The fear of God brings the soul to a consistency when it awaits upon God in religious duties. He that stops the sun in its flight, and the waves in their course, doth

bind up our thoughts by his fear. This is the grace that unites our thoughts together. And therefore you may try yourselves by this, whether or no when you approach the throne of grace doth the fear of God compose your spirit, doth it cause you to endeavour to get and keep your thoughts upon that, which then is required of you?

(2.) It renders the soul awful and solemn in the presence of God. We read, Heb. 12. 28, 29. "wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire;" such a person when he comes to any duty, sees him that is invisible, and therefore fears before him. A gracious soul although he be not always fervent as he should be, yet he will be always reverent, (so it always is when grace hath any actings in the soul) for the lowest degree of grace is this, to compose the spirit in the sight of God. Therefore it is said, Eccl. 5. 1. "keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God;" and certainly whensoever this grace doth exercise its power in any degree, one of the first effects of it is this, to make the soul reverent and solemn in the apprehension of God's perfections.

4. Moderation in the enjoyment of lawful things is another product of God's fear, and that upon a double account. (1.) In respect of the strictness of the law. (2.) In regard of the deceitfulness of the heart.

(1.) In respect of the strictness of the law. It is but a narrow path, and we are very ready to swerve from it. As one that walks upon a rope is very careful to poise himself, so that his body may not slip aside; so is one that hath a son-like fear, he knows that there is but a little step between the allowance of God and the desires of our lusts; and therefore he will not do all that he may, lest he do more than he should. Such a person when he tastes the honey, will be careful of his wings, that they be not dipped in the slime of it, that so he may like the bee keep his course and voyage to heaven free. Such a person considers with himself that more perish by meat, than by poison; because we are careful to keep ourselves from poison; but meat is the sustenance of our lives. *In licitis perimus omnes*, we all perish by the abuse of things lawful, or mostly do so.

(2.) In respect of the deceitfulness of the heart: we are so

apt to transgress those limits which are prescribed to us. Who is there among us but is apt to abuse the sweetness of grace to looseness, the power of grace to laziness, the assurance of grace to security, and the allowance of grace to licentiousness? And therefore because our hearts are naturally so deceitful, and so prone to transgress, such a person is very moderate in the use of lawful things. When he eats and drinks, this is his rule, he will eat so much as will neither unfit himself for duty, nor dispose himself to sin; so much as may neither distemper nature, nor disturb grace; so much he will venture upon the enjoyment of the creature, as may be a motive and excitement to raise up his soul to God. This is the proper effect of divine fear.

5. This is another product of filial fear; it causeth in the soul upon the least apprehension of God's displeasure a double inquiry, (1.) How we have provoked God? (2.) How we may appease him?

(1.) How we have provoked him? Such a soul hath a very quick eye to discover the Lord's anger; and when the Lord doth withdraw himself from it, this is the inquiry of such a soul, how have *I* provoked the Lord? Thus we read of Joshua, when his heart was struck with the fear of the Lord, he did by lot make inquiry after the offender, and never ceased till he had fixed upon Achan, that was the cause of God's anger. Thus doth a gracious heart take the candle of the Lord, and make an inquiry what may be the sin that eclipseth the light of his countenance, that shutteth up his bowels, that interposeth and intercepteth the influences of his grace, and the beams of comfort that come from him.

(2.) How he may be appeased? Oh the lamenting, the desires, and the vigorous motions of the soul towards the recovery of God's Spirit! How doth it daily plead for it in the name of Christ! Whereas other persons when a breach is made between God and their souls, as they commit sin without fear, so they lie in it without sense; they can bear the guilt of ten thousands of sins, which stand uncancelled in the presence of God; they do not make it their design to repair the breach that is made between their Creator and themselves; but it is otherwise with a soul that fears the Lord.

6. This fear of God is the best corrective of the fear of man. As the beams of the sun discourage the burning of the fire, so

doth this fear of God correct and abate the fear of the creature. As Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians, so doth the fear of the Lord take the heart off from an immoderate fear of the creature, Luke 12. 4, 5. "Fear not him that can kill the body, &c." This is the ground of all that sinful compliance that is in the world (I mean in reference to fear) viz. Persons fear the anger of a man, but presume on the mercy of God. Now therefore a gracious spirit doth realise to himself what the majesty of God is, what his purity, justice, power are, and from hence he quencheth all the fears of the creatures. And if it should happen at any time, that in some sudden temptation the fear of man should overpower him, yet nevertheless by consideration, he brings himself to his fixed temper; as if you put water and oil in a glass, if you shake the glass the water may get upon the oil; but let the glass stand still, then the oil (as a triumphant conqueror) will recover the supremacy: so here, although in a temptation, the fear of man may overpower him, yet when he compares a mortal creature to an immortal God, then doth the fear of God quench all other fears.

CHAP. V.

The consistency between the fear of God, and faith, hope, love and joy.

V. I Will now direct your attention to the consistency that is between the fear of God, and faith, love, hope and joy; and before I show you the particular agreement between these graces, let me premise these three things.

First. Know that there is an absolute necessity of their union in the soul of a gracious person upon this account, because although sin and grace oppose one another, yet grace and grace doth not, they all proceeding from the same root and cause.

which is the Spirit of God. It is the opinion of some, that grace in the soul is but one habit, and according to the variety of acts which it produceth, so it receives several titles; as you know the ocean as it washeth several shores, so it receiveth several names; so they think, that the habit of grace as it believes in God is called faith, as it depends upon him for the performance of some good it is hope, as it feareth him so it is thus entitled; but granting this is not a truth, suppose that every grace is a several habit, yet they all very well agree, and it must be so.

Secondly. There is a convenience in this agreement of the graces of the Spirit; as thus, one doth contemper and correct the exorbitances which otherwise would be in another, as I shall particularly show you when I come to the particular graces.

Thirdly. There is an actual existence of these graces in the soul; for as they are joined together in scripture, so they are experienced by every believer. These things being premised,

1. I shall begin with the first grace, *Faith*. There is an union between faith and fear in the soul; for that consider, that the fear of God although it doth weaken the security of the flesh, yet it never weakens the certainty of faith. There is a distrustful fear which faith expels, but there is an awful dread which faith cherisheth, and this is that fear which we are speaking of; the fear of God and faith are reciprocal causes of each other, for faith produceth fear, and fear produceth faith, or improves it. First, faith produceth this fear, Heb. 11. 7. "By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, &c." where it is observable, Noah did believe an hundred years before the flood came, that there would be such a destruction, and he believed that he should be preserved and rescued from that destruction (observe that) and yet Noah feared; so that a believer that doth not only believe the power of the threatener and the truth of the threatening, but believes he shall escape that threatening, yet he fears it; this is Noah's case. If once faith be quenched in the soul there will remain no fear. Indeed faith is the eye that seeth all things in God; as to God all things are present, and there is neither first nor last, so doth the eye of faith see all things, in some sense, as present; and therefore a believing soul looks upon the day of judgment to be as real as if it were this moment, because he

sees it in God, and this causeth him to fear. Whereas take away this faith and the soul is then secure; it being with the objects of our affections in distance of time, as it is with the objects of sense in distance of place. When a thing is far distant from mine eye, I cannot perceive it; so when that which is evil is at a great distance from me, without the eye of faith, I shall never fear it; every evil doth abate so much *de terribili* as it hath *de futuro*. But now faith realizeth these things to the soul, and so produceth fear. This fear doth improve faith. For there is a circle in these causes, as there is a commerce between heaven and earth; the vapours that ascend from the earth cause clouds, and those clouds descend in showers, and so are the causes of vapours; so it is with the graces of the Spirit. Faith produceth fear, and fear causeth the soul more to believe the judgments of God and his threatenings; for when once the mind presages evil and fears it, it will the more strongly believe it. The scripture unites these two graces, Psal. 64. 9, 10. "All men shall fear, &c. the righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in him;" here is an union between these two graces.

2. This fear of the soul is consistent with *hope*. Fear and hope in the soul of a christian, are like the cork and the lead to a net, the cork keeps it from sinking and the lead keeps it from too much floating; so it is here, fear keeps hope from degenerating into presumption, and hope keeps fear from sinking into despair. If you do abstract fear from hope, the soul will be lazy; and if you do abstract hope from fear, the soul will sink into a despondency. Therefore there must be a fear with hope, and that will appear, if you do consider these three things. (1.) The author of that reward which hope respects. (2.) The tenure of the conveyance of that reward. (3.) The quality of the reward itself. These three show there must be fear with the hope of a christian.

(1.) If you consider the author of that reward, it is the holy God; and therefore wherever there is a hope to receive a crown from his hand, there will be a fear to displease him. I will bring this down to a temporal case, thus. It is a rational thing to imagine that a subject doth hope to rise when he doth fear to displease his prince, for the king is the fountain of honour; and therefore if he doth not fear to displease him, he can never hope

to rise by him. No, it is the loyal subject that fears to displease his sovereign, that expects advancement by him. A christian who doth not fear to displease God, can never hope to be advanced by him.

(2.) If you respect the conveyance of this reward, and that is expressed thus, Heb. 12. 14. "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." This is the condition upon which the reward is promised, and therefore it is said, 1 John 3. 3. "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." What hope is that? That is, he that expects to be conformed to Christ in glory, he will imitate Christ in purity.

(3.) Consider the very quality of the reward, and that likewise excites fear. For what is the recompence of our hope but this, the vision of God? Now what saith our Saviour, Mat. 5. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," who is a pure God; since the happiness of a saint is the sight of the pure God, there must be purity of heart to dispose him for it. The air above is so pure that no sin can live there. And therefore wherever there is hope of heaven, there must be a fear of sin, because heaven consists in an absolute freedom from it. Now there must be hope with fear for these two reasons, for 1st. Fear without hope defiles the soul. 2dly. Fear without hope ruins the soul.

1st. It defiles the soul; for it renders our guilt more omnipotent than God's goodness; it makes sin to be as infinite an evil as God is an infinite good. And what is this but to debase God? and thus it stains the soul.

2dly. Fear without hope ruins the soul, and drives a man to a wretched neglect of all the means of recovery, and to a dreadful flight from God. As the frost and cold in winter do so bind up the influences of the earth, that it cannot produce its fruits; so these affections of fear and despair do so bind up the soul that it cannot exercise acts of dependance upon God; and therefore there must be a mixture of these two graces in the soul, that so the repenting sinner when he despairs in himself, may hope in God. When he sees nothing within him, nothing below him to help him, yet he may see something above him, that is, the mercy of God.

3. There is an union in the soul between fear and *love*. Love

without fear would become secure, and fear without love would become slavish. Love is the dearest companion of this fear; there is nothing more fearful than an ingenuous love, and nothing more loving than a filial fear. These two graces do equally knit the soul to God. Love is that grace which unites the soul to God, and fear keeps the soul from departing from God. "I will put my fear into their hearts that they shall not depart from me." These two graces have the same promises made to them; so you shall find Psalm 145. 19, 20. "He will fulfil the desires of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry and will help them, the Lord preserveth all them that love him." These two graces do embrace and support each other.

Objection. Doth not the scripture tell us, there is no fear in love, 1 John 4. 18. "but perfect love casteth out fear."

Answer. This fear that is here made irreconcileable with love, is not a fear of God's judgments, but a fear of persecution in the world; and so indeed, when our love is perfected it conquers the fears of death. Thus Tertullian of old understood this place, saith he, "What fear can be understood here, but the author of our denial of Christ." *Quem amorem perfectum nisi fugam timoris?* What perfect love must we understand here, but that which puts fear to flight, and that which animates us to a confession of Christ? And there are three reasons which confirm this interpretation.

(1.) The first is drawn from that expression in the 17th verse, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment," which may be interpreted thus; herein is our love made perfect and crowned, that we may have boldness in the day of temporal judgment, when we are arranged before princes for the cause of Christ.

(2.) Consider the parallel that is made between Christ and us, "because as he is, so we are in the world;" what is the meaning of it? That is, as Christ upon earth laid down his life to seal the truth, so while we are in this world upon the call of God's providence, we should lay down our lives for the confession of the truth.

(3.) Because it is said in the 18th verse, "He that feareth is not made perfect in love, and fear hath torment in it," that is, there is a rack, a pain, that is conveyed by the fear of death, as it is said, Heb. 2. 15. "who all their days were under a spirit

of bondage through fear of death." And wherever there is a fear of death there cannot be a perfect love of Christ; for the person that is a coward is next to an apostate. That person which fears death is ready to apostatize from Christ, when his life is in danger: but when this perfect love of Christ reigns and triumphs it is stronger than death. How formidable soever death is, yet the love of Christ will cause the soul to embrace it; if this interpretation be either novel to you, or if you think it not so genuine, you may reconcile the text by my doctrine; for then understand here, a slavish fear of God merely as of a judge, which is inconsistent with love; but for ought I know the other sense may comport well enough with the meaning of the spirit.

4. Another grace that is united in the soul with this holy fear is *joy*. This is a riddle to a carnal spirit, and yet it is one part of the mystery of godliness which grace teacheth, and which a holy soul is instructed in. Hence it is said in scripture, that "they did rejoice in God's goodness, and yet they feared his goodness." (1.) Our fear qualifies joy. (2.) This joy doth characterize and evidence our fear to be of the right kind.

(1.) This fear of God qualifies our joy. If you abstract fear from joy, joy will become light and wanton; and if you abstract joy from fear, fear then will become slavish. Hence it is said, Psalm 2. 11. "Rejoice with trembling." There is a sweet contemperation of these graces. In heaven God is equally rejoiced in and feared, and while we are here below we should aspire to that heavenly temper. Then doth the soul most kindly rejoice in God, when it is filled with an awful admiration of his goodness; for this fear doth not contract the heart as grief doth, but enlargeth the heart in God's praises.

(2.) This joy doth characterize our fear, and evidence it to be of a right stamp. So you shall find 112 Psal. 1. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments."

CHAP. VI.

Answering some questions, how far and in what manner the threatenings of the word should work upon the fear of a converted person.

vi. THERE are some questions which I shall propound concerning this grace, and so shall clear objections as I handle them.

Question 1. How far should the threatenings of the word work upon the fear of a converted person?

(1.) I answer. Every affection must be exercised upon its proper object; for they were planted by the hand of God in the nature of the reasonable creature, and therefore none of them must be eradicated, but must be regularly exercised. Now as the love of God is the loadstone of my love, so the justice of God is the object of my fear, and therefore these threatenings must work upon the soul.

(2.) That these threatenings must work upon the soul, it appears by this; because they are part of the medium whereby God doth bring the soul to himself, and whereby he doth direct the soul in the way that leads to life. There is an initial fear in the soul which prepares the way for the Spirit of adoption, and sometimes is in the soul before ever the Holy Spirit hath taken up his residence there. As you know the sun before it riseth, darts forth some light into that part of the heavens where it is not present. There is also a fear of God's judgments which hath not only the Spirit for its original, but the Spirit for its companion. This fear of God's threatenings is not only from the Spirit but with the Spirit, and therefore the Spirit of God is called the "Spirit of fear," Isa. 11. 2. Now this fear the Spirit makes use of while we live in this world, to direct us in the way to heaven. Therefore since the terrors of the Lord are part of the Spirit's discipline, certainly a gracious man should fear God's threatenings.

(3.) In the scripture the threatenings of God are frequently propounded to believers, and certainly they should work upon

their fear. The fear of God's judgments is not too servile a passion to be in a child of light. The apostle Paul certainly knew the mind of God and the tenour of the gospel, and yet you shall find his chosen arguments to excite us to serve God are many times drawn from the fear of his judgments. There are two places very remarkable, one in the 12 Heb. and the two last verses, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." Now observe, that the apostle speaks here to those that had an interest in the "Kingdom which cannot be moved:" and saith the apostle, "Let us have grace," that is, let us exercise grace so as to approach and serve him with "Godly fear;" and why, "for our God is a consuming fire." The other scripture is in Phil. 2. 12. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," where you may observe the apostle doth emphatically speak, not of doing it with faith and love, but with fear and trembling; and this fear and trembling is a posture fit for us till we come to the gate of heaven. To conclude the question, know that our Saviour who was the author of the gospel, preacheth it to his disciples, Luke 12. 5. "Fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." And therefore those wanton spirits that are all for oily doctrines, that will endure to hear of nothing but the riches of grace, cheat themselves; they flatter themselves into hell with vain hopes of heaven. As I must rejoice in God for his goodness, so I must fear him for his justice; therefore this is clear, the threatening of God must work upon believers.

Question 2. In what manner must the fear of God's judgments work upon believers? I answer in these propositions,

(1.) In the general all our religious acts must be ultimately terminated upon God. Take that as a rule, as his commands must be the principle to sway the conscience, so his glory must be the aim and the design of a christian. God must be the beginning, the middle, the end of all our actions; and therefore when I come to discourse what influence fear must have, carry this with you.

(2.) Although the command of God must be the ground of my obedience, yet the fear of God may be an excitation to it. The command of God is the *ratio formalis* of the obedience of

the creature, the fear of God may be the *ratio motiva*. Take all rewards and punishments and abstract them from the command of God, yet the command of God obligeth us; but add these and they will more powerfully enforce it. A cipher is nothing in itself, but add it to a sum and it increaseth the sum: rewards and punishments being added to the command to enforce it.

(3.) The fear of God should work upon us in this manner, to be a bridle to check and restrain us from sin. For you shall find this to be the method of the gospel, where God persuades us to duties he propounds reward; when he dissuades us from sin he presents and urgeth judgments; therefore in this manner should fear work upon the soul, Rom. 8. 13. "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die," there is a check from sin; "but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," there is an encouragement to duty.

(4.) This fear of God's judgments, or of the threatenings of God, its chiefest season is then, when some present temptation presseth upon us, when conscience and the affections are divided, when conscience doth withdraw a man from sin, and when his carnal affections draw him forth to it, then should the fear of God come in. It is a holy design for a christian to counterbalance the pleasures of sin with the terrors of it, and thus to cure the poison of the viper by the flesh of the viper. Thus that admirable saint and martyr bishop Hooper, when he came to die one endeavoured to dehort him from death by this, O Sir, consider, that 'Life is sweet, and death is bitter;' presently he replied, 'Life to come is more sweet, and death to come is more bitter,' and so went to the stake and patiently endured the fire. Thus as a christian may sometimes outweigh the pleasures of sin by the consideration of the reward of God, so sometimes he may quench the pleasures of sin by the consideration of the terrors of God. We read of our Lord Jesus, that he did outweigh the shame of the cross by the glory of his exaltation, Heb. 12. 2. He was not ashamed of the cross, because of the glory that was set before him. So a christian may thus consider with himself, that communion with God exceeds all the gratifications of the senses; that there is more pleasure in one minute's enjoyment of his love than in all the carnal dreggy delights of the world for ever: and on the other side, he may make use of this fear.

(5.) I conceive this, that the fear of God's threatenings doth more ingenuously work when it respects the loss of heaven than the casting into hell. For an ingenuous son doth not so much fear to be cast into a house of correction, as he fears disinheriting; so a gracious spirit doth more fear the loss of God's countenance, than all the bodily pains that can be inflicted upon him; this is a fear that is more ingenuous and filial.

(6.) The fear of God's judgments should so far, and in this manner work upon every christian, as to render his pardon the more welcome, and to make the grace and love of God to shine forth with a brighter lustre. Oh such a person as fears the power and the terror of God's wrath, how will he esteem Christ as the crown of his glory, as the spring of his joy, and as his riches! Oh such a person will break forth with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory in any thing but in the cross of Christ." There is no person that ever prizeth a sanctuary or an asylum at such a high rate, as he that is pursued by the avenger of blood; and no person will ever set a value upon the righteousness of Christ, and upon the mercy of God till he doth fear that wrath that is endless and remediless.

CHAP. VII.

An exhortation to the fear of God.

vii. LET me press upon you this eminent grace, a grace that in this respect hath a special prerogative and singularity that attends it, whereas many other graces of the christian life are but respective graces, they only concern some persons, some conditions, and some states of life; but the fear of God, shall I call it a single grace or rather an universal grace, that respects all persons in all states, and at all times. It is not a greater absurdity

for a carpenter to be without his rule, than for a christian to be without the fear of God. This is that grace which is the director of all other graces, and therefore let us fear him. But especially upon this account, fear the Lord because it is the best preservative against sin; the love of God is that which constrains us to service, the fear of God is that which checks and restrains us from disobedience. This will preserve the soul in the midst of snares; lay but this fear aside and you will fall in plain ground. Thus we read of Lot, by the fear of God he was preserved in the midst of defiled Sodom; but when he laid that aside he sinned upon the mount. Therefore as you desire to keep yourselves spotless, so let the fear of God reign in you. Remember our whole lives are a continued temptation, we walk in the midst of snares. O consider, that although the enemy be without us, yet the traitor is within us, I mean our deceitful hearts; and therefore fear God with a fear of reverence, and fear your hearts with a fear of jealousy: if this grace do but take its regency in the soul, the devil may surround us, but he cannot surprise us. It is then with the temptations of satan as it is with casting fire upon a marble pavement, which can do no hurt; but if you cast in but one spark into gunpowder it causeth a conflagration: if the fear of God guards the heart, the temptations of the devil are but like casting fire upon marble, there is no danger; but remove this bridle once, and every temptation is like a spark in gunpowder. The world without us prevails over us because of the world within us, and it is only the fear of God that keeps the soul always upon its watch and guard. And consider, it is as a duty which you are obliged to now under the gospel. There are various attributes in God, and as his justice doth not devour his mercy, so his mercy doth not violate his justice; and there must be proportionable affections in us to the attributes in God. As he is the God of mercy, so I should love and fear him too; but as he is a just God, so our fear is properly terminated upon him. Remember this, if every grace of the soul should languish, yet the fear of God last of all remains; that is the bond of the new covenant, "I will put my fear into their hearts that they shall not depart from me;" this is that grace that is of most universal use and influence in the christian's life; and therefore let us exercise this duty, this affection, that so we may be truly wise, we may be wise for ourselves, and wise towards God.

CHAP. VIII.

What heavenly wisdom is.

II. GENERAL head of discourse—That the fear of the Lord is *eminently wisdom*. Having opened the subject the "Fear of the Lord," the next thing to be opened is the predicate, 'that is wisdom.' It is recorded, Prov. 1 7. that it is the 'beginning of wisdom,' as it is so in point of order, so in point of excellency, this is the root, the fulness, and the perfection of wisdom.

This fear of the Lord is that which will entitle a man wise for ever. Now for the more clear discovery of this I will

i. Consider in the general what this heavenly wisdom is.

ii. Upon what account it is that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, the most eminent wisdom, and without which fear, seraphical angelical wisdom is nothing.

i. For the first of these, consider there is a double wisdom, as Aristotle distinguisheth it.

1. There is that which he calls a wisdom universal.

2. A particular wisdom.

Now the particular wisdom is this, when we see a person excellent in an art, we say that man is wise as to that profession. The universal wisdom and that which is in perfection is this, when there is a knowledge of those principles and means which have a tendency to a man's absolute happiness. Now this is the wisdom that here I shall treat of; and before I show you the connexion of God's fear with it, or how the fear of God is this wisdom, we will consider

(1.) Wisdom in its causes.

(2.) Wisdom in its objects.

(3.) Wisdom in its acts.

(4.) Wisdom in its scope and aim.

(1.) The cause of this heavenly wisdom. This wisdom is a divine ray or emanation which flows from the Father of lights. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Job 32. 8. Man hath the facul-

ty, but God must enlighten that faculty. A dial is capable to show us the hour of the day, but the sun must first shine upon it: so the understanding of man is capable of wisdom, but God must shine upon it, so that in reference to its cause and original it is heavenly.

(2.) Consider the objects of this wisdom, and those principally are two. 1st. God, and 2dly. A man's self. These are the two poles upon which heavenly wisdom turns itself.

1st. God as he is glorious in himself and good to us, so he is the object of spiritual wisdom. It is not the knowledge of the nature of diamonds or pearls that can enrich us, but the knowledge of the wise God makes us wise; this wisdom as it comes from God, so it returns to him, as those rivers that proceed from the sea do empty themselves into it.

2dly. There must be the knowledge of a man's self, and that in two respects.

1. In respect of his capacity.

2. In respect of his immortality.

First, In respect of his capacity. There is an unlimitedness in the desires of a reasonable soul; our desires are not confined to those degrees of goodness which are scattered in the variety of earthly things, but reach forth towards the whole latitude of good, they can never rest nor acquiesce till they come to the comprehensiveness that is in God, and this is wisdom to know this capacity; for it is the greatest folly in the world for a man to measure his capacity, in respect of his senses.

Secondly. The knowledge of the immortality of the soul, so that all mortal and perishable creatures are no more able to make the soul happy, than the light of a candle to give day to the world.

(3.) What are the acts of this wisdom? They are principally three. 1st. Deliberation. 2dly. Election. 3dly. Application.

1st. The first is deliberation. A consulting with ourselves how we may advance ourselves to the fountain of goodness, how we may be really and eternally happy, how we may secure our souls, which are our jewel, with the loss of which the whole world would be but a specious beggary: and this act of deliberation, considering how we may make ourselves happy, is the peculiar excellency of a man; this is that which distinguisheth him from the inferior order of creatures.

2. Election or a choice of those means which have an intrinsical respect to the obtaining of that happiness, is another act of wisdom. Hence it is said, Prov. 2. 10. "When wisdom entereth into thine heart," (observe the expression) bare knowledge enters into the head, or it enters into the tongue, but wisdom enters into the heart; it makes a man to choose those things which may promote his real happiness.

3. Another act of this heavenly wisdom is an application of our light to practice. When we honour our knowledge by conformable acts, it is a fruit of spiritual wisdom; and this is the great difference between mental knowledge and prudential judgment. Mental knowledge is terminated in the bare speculation of an object; but that which is practical judgment goes forth into the conversation. Hence it is said, Prov. 12. "I wisdom dwell with prudence." What is prudence, but the reduction of our knowledge to the various occurrences of our lives? Divine wisdom always ends in a good conversation; it is better known by the life, than by discourse. Naked knowledge is like the light of the moon, men sleep by it; but this heavenly wisdom is like the light of the sun, men work by it; and therefore it is said, Jam. 3. 13. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

(4.) The aim and scope, and design of spiritual wisdom is, to enable a person to glorify God and to enjoy him; to glorify God that so God may be honoured by us, and to enjoy God that we may be honoured by him. Thus you have the draught and scheme of that wisdom that is heavenly.

CHAP. IX.

How the fear of God is wisdom.

ii. WHICH brings me nearer to the text. In what respects is the fear of God this heavenly wisdom? And that I shall answer in these four particulars.

The fear of God is the best wisdom, because

1. It manageth the highest business.
2. It advanceth the supreme interest.
3. It avoideth the most destructive dangers.
4. (In order to all these) It improves the best seasons.

1. The fear of God is wisdom, because it manageth the highest business. Wisdom is not conversant about toys, but in the guiding of the soul to its eternal rest; in that is wisdom expressed and exercised. We look upon a man that spends his time in picking of straws, and then in sticking them upon his clothes, as a madman; what is the reason of it? Because these acts are below reason. So that man that spends his time and strength in reference to the world only, is a spiritual fool: what is the reason of it? Because these actions are below a christian; and the one is as much spiritual folly as the other is natural frenzy. Aristotle tells us, that wisdom is the knowledge of the most honourable truths, and of those that are of the greatest concernment: now the fear of God is conversant about these, and that appears principally in this particular; this fear conforms our greatest actions to that which is the greatest rule of wisdom, and that is the law of God; which is a draught of his will. Now the will of God as it is the rule of goodness, so it is the rule of wisdom; and this grace of divine fear squares all our great actions according to the rule of the word of God. This is that grace which deals with inviaible sins, and those that are not known to the eye of the world; this is that grace which balanceth all our affections and corrects their excess. All temptations are usually grounded in love of pleasures, profits, or honours. Now it is this fear that crucifies the affections, is the mother of obedience

and devotion; and therefore certainly because it manageth all our highest works, and conforms them to that rule that is perfect wisdom: this fear of God is most eminently wisdom, upon this account. There is no such fool in the world as the careless christian, for that person is heedless in his main business; and however this fear of God may be inconvenient to our worldly affairs; however it may be troublesome to the flesh (for the world accounts it but a fond scrupulosity, and the flesh accounts it but a weak folly) yet know thus much (for I speak in answer to that objection) it is true wisdom for a man to be esteemed a fool in the world. 1 Cor. 3. 18. "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." This fear by thus conforming our greatest acts to the rule of wisdom, certainly is wisdom eminently; when the fear of God doth draw the line, a man's steps must be very straight.

2. This fear of God doth advance the supreme interest of the soul, and therefore it must be the best wisdom. And here

First. Negatively, take all the blessings of the world these are not the highest interest of the soul; the pursuit of earthly things is more worth than the gain of them: that person that wastes himself in the gain of worldly advantages, doth (if I may so speak) dig for iron with a mattock of gold. Such a person is like some foolish children, which with a great deal of toil and sweat run after a butterfly, and when they have got it, what is the reward? A worm between their fingers; alas, a great estate many times proves poison. But I am sure it is never bread, it can never give satisfaction; therefore it is not wisdom principally, or only to follow that. Consider, how many men of basest spirits and lowest parts, have wrought themselves into worldly estates. He that looks for happiness in this world, it is as if a man should look for treasure in a coalpit, he is not likely to find it there; therefore in the next place positively.

Secondly. The fear of God promotes that which is the supreme interest of the soul. The soul is more noble than the body, and therefore that which makes the soul happy must be our supreme interest. Seneca hath written a whole epistle upon this subject, 'What is true wisdom?' And after he hath removed all natural enjoyments and excellencies, he doth resolve true wisdom to consist in this; this is his expression, then a man is truly wise when he doth *ad bonum revertere suum*, return to

his own good. Now what is the good of the creature? I answer, there is a double good or perfection, which belongs to every creature. (1.) The absolute good and perfection wherein it was created, and that is the perfection of its beauty. (2.) There is a respective perfection and good for which it was created, and that is the perfection of its use. And therefore if you would know what is the supreme interest of the soul? In one word it is this, when a soul doth arrive to the image of God, which is the perfection of its beauty, and to communion with God, which is the perfection of its use.

(1.) When a soul arrives to the image of God, which is the perfection of its beauty. Thus we read, that man was created after God's image in righteousness and true holiness: now this grace of all others, hath the most powerful influx upon the conversation of a saint, and therefore is most necessary to repair the ruins and decays of God's image.

(2.) As for the enjoyment of God and communion with him, this grace likewise of all others hath the most excellent power to bring us to that. The fear of God is that grace which makes God our friend, and therefore it promotes our highest interest. Suppose a man were to live for ever in the world, I should then esteem it a piece of wisdom for him to make the great ones of the world his friends. But alas we must appear before God as our judge, and therefore to ensure God and get his image, and enjoy his favour, is the highest and best wisdom. Yet let me add this by the way, that the person that fears God drives on a double interest, Prov. 16. 7. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him." Take this therefore as a rule, that a religious constancy will sooner gain men to be your friends than a base compliance; therefore he that fears God best promotes that interest too. But however, suppose he doth not, the attaining of God's image and his favour are the supreme interest of the soul. The fear of God will bring to the soul both perfection and satisfaction, and therefore it is the best wisdom.

3. The fear of God enables the soul to avoid the most destructive dangers. All the wisdom of the world is exercised upon one of these two points, either to obtain some good that a man desires, or to decline some evil that a man fears. Now the fear of God as it enables a man to attain to that which is an in-

finite good, so to avoid that which is an infinite evil. By how much the more excellent and more difficult the good is that we would obtain, and how much the more perilous and imminent an evil is that he would avoid, by so much greater is the wisdom that doth obtain the one, and avoid the other. Now the wisdom of God's fear teacheth us to obtain the highest good, and to avoid the worst and highest evil. What is the greatest danger in the world? It is not the loss of external goods; for alas these things are of a perishing nature, riches take wings and fly away, honour depends upon the fancy of another, pleasure dies in the very enjoyment of it; therefore the loss of these things cannot be the greatest danger. Nor can the enduring of the most sharp afflictions in this life be the greatest evil: for consider how many of those that have been dear in God's affections have lain under the greatest corrections; nay, they have triumphed over them; therefore that is not the greatest danger. But the loss of the soul, that precious jewel, that is more worth than the world, is the greatest loss, and to endure the terrors of God in conscience is the greatest misery. Now the fear of God doth enable the soul to decline this loss, and to escape these terrors, therefore it must be the greatest wisdom.

4. (In order to all these things) the fear of God doth improve the best seasons. We esteem it a great piece of wisdom in the world, for a person to improve his time. There is no person but hath his particular season and his time. Now the fear of God teacheth us to improve that season and time for our eternal good, and that upon a double account.

(1.) In regard of the gales of the spirit's motions, which are very transient. For we cannot command the clock of mercy, to strike when we please, therefore a man should improve every season: for it is said, Phil. 2. 12. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," it follows, verse 13. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is the fear of the Lord which excites a man to blow up every spark into a flame, and cherish every motion of the spirit, for he knows not how long this breath of the spirit will remain. Such a person doth improve opportunities. Now opportunity is ἀνθος καιρου, the flower of time. As a flower may wither and decay, yet the stalk remain; so a man may lose his opportunity, and yet enjoy time. The day of God's patience is

longer than the day of his grace; there are many persons that live under ordinances, but find them altogether lifeless and powerless as to their souls; for they have lost their opportunity, and God withdraws his Spirit, and strives no more with them. Now the fear of God enables the soul to improve every season, lest his Spirit should withdraw itself. The fear of God doth impress this truth upon the soul, that as the purchasing of our salvation depends upon the satisfaction of Christ, so the obtaining of that salvation depends upon the improvement of the day of grace, 2 Cor. 6. 2. "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

(2.) This fear of God causeth the soul to improve the season that it enjoys, in respect of the brittleness and frailty of life, our time being certainly short and uncertainly continued. He that is the sovereign Lord of our persons, is the disposer of our time. Death doth not follow the course of nature, but the order of God's decree; therefore it cuts off some in their sins before they come to the flower. Now the fear of God impresseth upon the soul these apprehensions, I cannot command the motions of the Spirit, I cannot lengthen out the thread of life; therefore I will improve the present season. This is that grace which causeth the soul to consider, because eternity depends upon my time, it is most precious, and therefore I will improve it. As a piece of parchment which in itself is not worth a shilling, may be worth ten thousand pounds, in respect of what it conveys; so this short life which thou enjoyest, which in itself is of little worth, yet eternity depends upon it, therefore it is most valuable. The sum is this, do but put these three questions to yourselves, whether or no it is not the highest reason in the world for a man to manage all his acts in the fear of God, who is his judge; to design all his acts for the glory of God, who is his Creator; to conform all his ways according to the will of God, who is his great master; if you would but resolve these things by the judgment of renewed reason, certain I am, you would esteem the fear of God to be the best wisdom. If Solomon could tell us, that he is wise that wins other men's souls, how much more is he wise that saves his own? Now it is the fear of God which is the instrument of our salvation; therefore let that be your principle to govern and order your whole lives, let this be your great engine, and the spring of all your actions to have the fear of God

as your director and governor. Certain I am, when at the last day we shall appear before him who is the wisdon of the Father, then shall only those who have followed this course be justified by him. There is good reason therefore that a wicked man, should be esteemed the greatest fool, and the holy man, the only wise person.

CHAP. X.

Opening the several false wisdoms of the world.

NOW I come to the use of the whole. This doctrine gives a check to the false wisdoms of the world: you may as in a glass see the extreme difference of those principles of wisdom in the managemement of all affairs which the world lays down, and those principles of spiritual wisdom which are laid down in the word. He is a wise man in the world's account that can spin a web of vanity, who can drive on his carnal designs to the best advantage; but the worldly wise man is a fool in religion, Jer. 8. 9. "Lo they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" That soul that trembles at God's word, hath more true wisdom than all the sophies of the world. For the opening of this more fully to you, I will discuss it in this method; I will consider

1. What are the designs and ends of worldly wise men.

2. What are those means which they use to achieve those ends.

3. I will show you that that which they account wisdom in the management of those means, for the attainment of those ends, is perfect folly.

1. For the first of these, the ends of carnal men in the general, are worldly happiness, that which the world can afford them.

This is ever (by the corrupt judgment of man) formed as his happiness, and into this all the motions of his soul are ultimately resolved: there is, since the fall, not only a maim in the sensual appetite, but in the intellectual and highest power of the soul. All the acts of an unsanctified understanding are foolish; and this is the first ground of the world's folly, an act of the understanding whereby they look upon something as their end, and as their happiness, which is not so. The scripture doth diversify it into three things, into pleasures, profits, and honours, for thus much the world affords. Now the means whereby the world designs to attain these ends proportionably are three, 1 John 2. 16. "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," &c. "is of the world." The world doth design to purchase these three ends by these three means; the pleasures of the world by the lust of the flesh; the profits of the world by the lust of the eyes, and the honours of the world by the pride of life. These are the means it useth for the attainment of these ends. Now there is a worldly wisdom which is employed in the using those means to that end, and this wisdom is likewise divided into three heads, James 3. 15. "that wisdom which descendeth not from above, is earthly, sensual, devilish."

(1.) It is an earthly wisdom because it is exercised upon earthly objects, for earthly ends: this respects the gain of the world.

(2.) It is called a sensual wisdom because it aims at the satisfaction of our flesh; the bent of nature runs that way, for the gratifying of our senses, which are common between us and beasts, and thus it doth aim at pleasures.

(3.) It is called a devilish wisdom upon this account, because pride which is the instrument whereby it would advance itself to glory, doth not only proceed from the devil as its author, but is in the devil as in its subject. There are some sins which make men the devil's slaves, but there are other sins which make men the devil's sons. Men are slaves to the devil when they commit such sins which the devil is not capable of, as all those sins which are merely acted by the body: but men are the devil's sons when they commit such sins which the devil is capable of, as pride, malice, and such other spiritual sins; for these render a man as like the devil as an incorporated soul can be like an incorporeal

spirit. Thus in general I have laid down the scheme and draught of that which I will open particularly to you: for the

1st of these, The ends and designs of those persons that are wise according to the world. In the general know thus much, there is no greater mistake in the world, than when a man mistakes his end: this I lay down as a principle which will carry me through all the discourse. For as it is direct folly for a man to propound to himself no end in his actions (this is as if a man should strike a ball into the open air, there will be no return of it to him again) so it is the next degree of madness and folly for a man to mistake his end; and the reason of it is this, the last end of a man is happiness, and the best that he can design for himself. Now can there be a greater mistake than about our happiness? Pleasures, honours, and profits, the devil makes use of as his engines to destroy and undermine us; therefore that man is lost, the very first step that he takes, who makes these things his end. According to this method did the devil manage his first temptation; for so you shall find, Gen. 3. 6. "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (there is the lust of the flesh) and that it was pleasant to the eyes (there is the lust of the eyes) and a tree to be desired to make one wise" (there is the pride of life) then she was taken and foiled. And satan found this temptation was so successful, that he hath formed all his snares ever since according to this first model; therefore, when a man shall once propound these things to be his end, it is folly, the devil hath outwitted him. Let us consider the more particular reasons why the propounding of these things as our end is the folly of a rational creature; for the opening of that I must lay down this previous proposition. The soul of man is his better part: the soul is the angel, and therefore that must only be propounded as my end which can bring that to perfection and satisfaction, because therein consists the happiness of the creature. Now consider the soul under these three notions.

1. Consider the soul in reference to its nature, and so it is immaterial.

2. Consider the soul in reference to its capacity, and so it is infinite (in some sense.)

3. Consider the soul in reference to its continuance and duration, and so it is eternal.

Now by the opening of these you will see what madness it is for a reasonable creature to propound any worldly thing to himself as his end. Consider,

First, The nature of the soul, which is immaterial: and therefore it can neither receive perfection nor satisfaction from the world. Whatsoever doth convey either of these things, must have some commensurateness, some suitableness to the nature of the soul: to give you an instance, consider the bodily senses, whenever they receive delight, it springs from the proportion that is between the object and the senses. The eye when it receives pleasure, it is because there is a suitableness between the visive faculty, and the colour of the thing seen. Natural reason receives delight from considering the contexture and concatenation that is between natural productions and their causes, here is a commensurateness between them; but now the upper part of the soul cannot receive any perfection or satisfaction, but from God, because there is nothing suitable to its nature besides him. As it was breathed from God, and inspired by him into the body, so it can only be perfected in him.

Secondly. If you consider the capacity of the soul, and that (in some degree) is infinite. The soul of man is capable of the image of God, of righteousness and holiness to renew him; it is capable of the peace of God to delight him; it is capable of the wrath of God, which is infinitely above the fears of man. Now can the world satisfy this soul which is capable of these things? We use to say, that a well or the brain of a man is empty, when the one wants water and the other wants wit, although the one be full of air and the other full of vapours; the reason of it is this, because wherever there is a want of that which should be of any thing, we say that it is empty. If the whole world were put into the heart of man, yet the heart would be empty without God, because it wants that of which it is capable, and which it should have. There must always be a conformity between the ingredients and the receptivity of the subject that takes them in. Is it not a folly then to make the world your end? A man may as soon fill a vessel with virtue, or learning, as fill the soul with the world.

Thirdly. Consider the continuance of the soul. It is of an immortal duration; it shall continue as long as God is merciful to save, as long as God is just to punish. Then certainly the

propounding the world as our aim or design is a great folly; for these are all lying delights and perishing vanities. Would you not esteem that man a very fool who should make a journey for a year, and provide victuals but for one day? Thus foolish is he who makes a journey for eternity with the things of mortality. All the things here below may be compared to the diurnal river (that I have read of) which runs in the day, but is dry in the night; the reason they give of it is this, because it springs from the melting of snow, which lies on the top of the mountains. Now the beams of the sun dissolving that snow in the day, there is a current and stream, but the snow being congealed in the night, then is the channel dry. So it is with the world, all the things here below run in the day for the time (possibly) of life, or of prosperity; but when the night of death comes, then those rivers are dry; and therefore certainly it cannot but be the greatest folly and madness for a person to make these things his end. It is a rule the heathen gives, it is a note of folly for a man to make an ill bargain; I know not what worse bargain can be made, than for a man to exchange his soul for the world, therefore he is the greatest fool that doth so. But on the other side, consider that God is an object that is able to bring both perfection and satisfaction to the soul; he is able to bring perfection, because in him there is a transcendency of all good; he is able to bring satisfaction, because once God being enjoyed there is no fear of the loss of him. He brings perfection to the soul in its chiefest faculties; to the understanding he brings in perfection as he is the first and the highest in *generi veri*, as he is the first truth; to the will he brings perfection, as he is the last and chiefest *in genere boni*, as he is the chiefest good. Thus the understanding is perfected in its knowledge, and the will is perfected in its love; therefore for the soul to make sure of him, (as it doth by the fear of God) to make God its friend, certainly it is the best wisdom. The sum is this, in God there is a fulness of perfection, and a perpetuity of fruition, and therefore the soul once attaining him is made really and perfectly happy; whereas all the things of the world fall short as to the conveyance of these two.

CHAP. XI.

The folly of worldly wise men in particular, in pursuing the pleasures, profits and honours of the world.

2. CONSIDER these things in particular; we will take them asunder, and so show you how every carnal man is the greatest fool, by pursuing worldly things.

1st. Consider pleasures. This is one end for which many persons do rack their understandings and employ their knowledge; and the souls of very many serve them for no other use but to be (if I may so speak) as cooks to provide sauces for their bodies. Certainly this must needs be a very great folly; for do you think the candle of the Lord was enlightened in a man merely to search after earthly satisfactions? Do you think the understanding (which is the excellency of the reasonable creature) was given merely to be conversant about these things, which are common between us and beasts? (for sensual pleasures are the happiness of a beast) it cannot be. The folly therefore of pursuing of this, will appear to you in two things.

(1.) Suppose you could squeeze all the pleasures of the world into one draught, yet they will deceive your expectations, and therefore it is a folly to search after them. Take all the pleasures of the world, and they cannot satisfy your empty senses, much less are they able to fill the expanded desires of your souls. All the glory of the world cannot satisfy the desires of one eye, much less can it fill the desires and vacuities of the heart. Worldly pleasures are a sum in our desires, they are but a cipher in our enjoyment; they are Junos in the pursuit, but they are clouds in the embracement. All the pleasures of the world are but an earnest of grief, if not of ruin: take them all and bring them to a person that lies under a troubled conscience, how suddenly are they extinguished? They are no more able to give ease to a wounded spirit, than a drop of wine is able to sweeten a large vessel of water; and therefore certainly it must be a folly

to make these your end and happiness, because they deceive your expectations. Whereas the pleasures which the soul obtains from communion with God, they do not cloy us but they satisfy us; the things of the world cannot satisfy our senses, but the peace of God passeth all understanding; and therefore there is a vast difference between them, and consequently that wisdom is more excellent that pursues the one, than that which pursues the other. Those pleasures which come from religious exercises are generous, and more co-natural to spirits, they do not degrade the reasonable creature, they do not sink a man beneath his species as bodily pleasures do. As that heat which is conveyed to the body by exercise, is far more natural and wholesome than that which is conveyed by fire; so those pleasures which the soul that fears God obtains by religious duties, are far more excellent than those dreggy delights which are conveyed by the things of this world.

(2.) As pleasures do deceive our expectations, so they draw forth our corruptions, and consequently render us miserable; and therefore the pursuit of them is the greatest folly. There is nothing more dangerous in the world than sin mingled with pleasure; it is like poison in sweet wine, which suddenly destroys, which presently strikes to the brain and heart, and so conveys death more speedily. And therefore that person who now makes it his design to taste the pleasures of sin, or rather to wallow in them; to drink them in as a fish doth water, as Tertullian speaks, *post pauca libidinum momenta evaporata*, after a few moments of lust which are evaporated, what will remain in the soul? The body will fail the lust, the lust will fail the satisfaction, and all will fail the man; and then what is become of his pleasure? What remains of it but the worm and the fire? And is it not a folly then? Oh do but consider, do you think the images of these pleasures which are enjoyed in this world are able to refresh the soul of a damned person? No. They are all extinguished there, they will rather increase the torment.

2dly. Consider the profits of this world being made our end, whether they can make us happy, or consequently whether a man is wise in pursuing of them. As the scripture tells us, that "laughter is madness," so it tells us, that "riches are vanity;" and therefore the pursuit of them cannot purchase to a man the title of a wise man, Prov. 21. 26. "the getting of riches by a

lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death." All the riches of the world are not able to convey that happiness upon which wisdom is exercised, in respect of those considerations which were before laid down. Certainly you would say, that if a man should lie under a paroxysm of the gout or stone, that this man would esteem it a very foolish thing in another, to tell him that a piece of gold would heal him. There is no suitableness between that and his disease; it is just so here, there is a vast unsuitableness between the soul and earthly treasures. Besides, impress this upon yourselves; when the soul shall take its farewel of the world, it can carry none of these things with it; and this renders it to be a most egregious folly to pursue them. Would you not account that man a very fool that when he comes to an inn, should spend all his time there to furnish and adorn a room with curious hangings, when he must stay but for a night, and leave it the next day? Oh consider, what is our life! Is it not a vapour? Is it not a bubble? Is it not sometimes shorter than a night? And shall we spend our time and our thoughts, which are the noblest offspring of our souls, about the pursuit of that which is like the hanging of a room for a night? Is not this folly and madness?

3dly. To come to the honours of the world. And as the scripture tells us, that "laughter is madness," and "riches are vanity;" so it tells us, that "honour is but a fancy." What is the glory of the world? It is a phantasm, a shadow, a mere reflection, that which hath no reality in it. There is a notable expression in Psalm 62. 9. "surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." They are the greater lie of the two upon this account, because greatness promiseth something, and performs nothing: and therefore for a person to make this his aim, certainly it must be an argument of the greatest folly. Do but a little realize to yourselves this, when the wise men of the world, those that are wise in their generation, shall appear before God, when they shall reflect upon all earthly objects, and consider the vanity and the vexation of them, how will they befool themselves? What furious reflections will the soul make upon itself, when it shall consider for that which is not, the treasures of the world, for a mere fancy, for that which is madness in itself; I have hazarded and lost the enjoyment of an infinite good for ever. To conclude, there is no fool like the

sinning fool, who ventures his soul at every turn, and to obtain the world runs blindfold into endless ruin.

CHAP. XII.

That all human knowledge is not sufficient to make a man wise.

FROM hence we may learn, that those persons which please themselves only with human knowledge, are not wise in scripture account. If it were possible for a man to unravel nature from the cedar to the hyssop, if he had such a judgment as to penetrate into all natural conclusions, and to resolve all effects into their proper causes; yet if this man be without the fear of God (as Jerom said concerning worldly-wise men in the general, *sapientur in infernum descendunt*) he doth but wisely go to hell. Now that I may show you, that all human knowledge without the fear of God cannot render a man truly wise; consider it in these three respects.

1. In respect of its insufficiency to repair the ruins of the fall, or to perfect that which is amiss. Experienced Solomon tells us, that "that which is crooked cannot be made straight;" Eccles. 13. 7. I shall apply it thus, there is an impossibility in natural knowledge to rectify the spirit of man, which is fallen from its primitive rectitude, or to restore the image of God to the soul, which is so much distorted by reason of sin. Rom. 1. 21. The apostle speaking concerning the wisest heathens, "because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened," 22. v. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," all this is spoken of the wiset heathens. Seneca in a letter of his, where he makes an inquiry after wisdom, resolves it to be this, 'for a man to have his soul

pure, and an imitator of God.' Now this human knowledge cannot attain unto; so that in respect of its insufficiency, it cannot make us happy.

2. If you consider its malignancy against the truths of God, either against the sublimity of the gospel, or against the simplicity of it; it will appear, that it cannot render a man wise.

(1.) If you consider that malignancy that there is in human knowledge against the sublimity of the gospel. Those truths which reason cannot comprehend, it will not embrace. Hence we find, that the Socinians reject several of the fundamentals of christianity, because they are above the flight of our reason. We read of the philosophers, Acts 17. 32. that "they mocked at the resurrection:" and we read of Julian, that he did upbraid christians as persons that were captives to a blind belief. Such kind of truths carnal reason in its elevations opposeth.

(2.) And the simplicity of the gospel human knowledge is opposite and repugnant to, and is malignant against it. Thus we read, that the doctrine of Christ was esteemed foolishness by the wise men of the world, because it was not conveyed to them in the blandishments of rhetoric, and because the very matter of the gospel was such, as their pride and lust would not stoop unto. Experience tells us, that the gospel is above natural, and against corrupt reason. Now since human knowledge (when it is alone without the fear of God) is thus malignant, since it puts sin into armour (as I may so speak) certainly this can never render a man truly wise.

(3.) Consider its vicinity to corruption; when it is in its lustre, it then draws near to its period; that death that doth attend a person, will bury all his learning in the same grave with him. Intellectual differences shall shortly cease, and then moral differences shall take place; one moment shall equal the learned and the unlearned, the knowing and ignorant person, they shal at last stand upon equal ground, but then good and bad men shall be differenced for ever. Now since death so suddenly approacheth, certainly this cannot be that which maketh us wise.

CHAP. XIII.

The naked theory, or speculation of divine truths, not sufficient to make a man wise. Sinful craft is folly.

FROM hence I shall draw this conclusion also, that the naked theory, or speculation of divine truths, is not sufficient to make a man wise. If knowledge be only confined to the brain, if it be a naked illumination, if there be only a model of divine truths in thy head, without the fear of God, thou mayest have a curious knowledge, but thou wantest a saving knowledge. Now that I may show this the more clearly to you, I will lay down this rule, and so measure the bare knowledge of divine things by it; all knowledge of what nature soever, is to be valued according to the end for which it is. Now the knowledge of divine things hath a double end, the glory of God and the rest of the soul and its salvation; the bare knowledge of divine things without an answerable practice, is defective in these two ends, where it is separated from the fear of God; and this I shall evince and evidence to you.

1. For the glory of God, our Saviour hath told us, that his Father is such an husbandman, as esteems himself glorified in the fruits of our obedience. That person that is able to draw a map of the divinity to us, that can deduce one attribute from another in the divine essence; this man unless he doth practise what he knows, he glorifies God no more than a painter doth him whose picture he draws: God is not glorified in lifeless painted words, but in our works, when we bear his image and are conformed to his law; when we are renewed in our minds; as towardly children reflect a glory upon their parents, by expressing their persons and imitating their virtues; so doth a soul that fears God. The devils that are intelligent essences, know more by the subtilty of their natures than any man in this life, yet are far distant from glorifying of God. And in this respect, the smallest degree of practical knowledge is infinitely more va-

luable than the greatest measure of that which is merely terminated in speculation. Take a christian that trembles at God's word, that looks heaven-ward, this man doth understand more or better of divine truths, than the most subtle schoolmen, than the greatest Rabbins in the world. To give it you by instance, as a husbandman who knows what part of his ground is fit for meadow, what part is fit for pasture, and what part is fit for corn; although this man doth not know how to survey his ground, or how to draw an exact platform of it, yet he shall bring more advantage from this ground to the owner of it, than the most skilful mathematician that is able to survey it exactly, according to the rules of art, but wants knowledge in the tillage and manuring of it: so that christian which reduceth his knowledge to practice by a holy life, reflects a greater glory upon God, than the most exact and skilful person in the points of divinity without the fear of God; therefore certainly the naked illumination of divine truths cannot make a man wise.

2. This cannot save the soul and bring it to its rest. Bare knowledge can never reach to heaven; it must be accompanied with the fear of God, and with other graces, 2 Pet. 1. 8. "for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful," &c. That knowledge is barren that is without solid and saving grace. Take a man that is able to delineate to you a system of divinity, that hath in his head the most sublime notions; yet if this man hath not the fear of God, that knowledge is no more able to satisfy his soul, than the picture of a great feast is able to satisfy the appetite of one that is almost starved with hunger; this can never render a man happy. We read of Dives when he was in hell, he had a heaven and a blessedness in his eye, but they did him no good; so it is here. It is just with such a person as with an ignorant physician, though possibly he may know the shape and the colour of an herb as it is set down in an herbal, yet he neither knows its virtue nor its operation, nor how to prepare it for a medicine: so many persons among us, who know in general what the truths of religion are; as to their practice, as to the virtue and operation of them, they are utterly strangers. Psal. 95. 10. there is a notable expression, "it is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways." A strange expression, that the Israelites should not know the ways of God,

who had received instructions miraculously from heaven; the meaning of it I conceive to be this, this people do err in their hearts, and they have not my ways (in their hearts) they had such a knowledge of God's ways, as a man hath of a country by a map, but they had not the experimental knowledge of God's ways. Now you know a person that is to walk into a strange country, it is far better for him to have a beaten path, and the directions of an ordinary traveller, than to have the most accurate geographical description of it, and he shall sooner come to his journey's end; so that person that desires to attain everlasting rest, let him walk in the steps of those before him that have attained the place, and let him experience those truths they have practised in the fear of God, and so he shall attain it. So that in respect of the glory of God, and the rest of the soul, it is not the bare knowledge of divine truths that can make us wise: but let me annex

3. A third thing, which is this; the bare knowledge of divine truths is so far from attaining this double end, that where it is disjoined from the fear of God, it aggravates the ruin of a person; and therefore this can never render a man wise. This knowledge will light a man to a brighter damnation. There are many persons that are right in their opinions, but have vile affections; and the knowledge of these persons will increase their sorrow; they are like the Ethiopians that have a bright eye in a dark body, so they have much knowledge while they walk in the ways of sin: but in conclusion, this knowledge of theirs will be like a talent of gold to a man that is in the sea, it will drown him the sooner, and sink him the deeper; so it is here, their knowledge of divine things will sink them deeper in. the wrath of God, an ignorant wretch shall have a cooler hell than these sublimated christians that are without the fear of the Lord. The sum is this, put it thus to yourselves; what a folly is it for men to be disputing of religion and heaven, while others that are less knowing surprise it, like that person that was gazing on the moon till he fell into a pit, or as a lark that flies up into heaven for a time, but at last falls into the net of the fowler. Thus it is with many men.

This consideration, that the fear of God is wisdom, shows unto us the falseness of that sinful craft which is so much used in the world; when men design by the slight of brain to over-

reach their neighbours, and this they esteem their glory. There are many among us that live according to that hell-bred proverb, that 'plain dealing is a jewel, but he that useth it shall die a beggar;' I confess, if this proverb were true, it is a wonder, since we have so many dishonest men among us, that so many die beggars: but know thus much, that that person that employs his understanding to deceive his neighbour, that person which doth affect the glory of acuteness in the ways of sin, doth but the more conform himself to the devil, who is a spirit of great knowledge, but of greater wickedness. Happy are those souls that do not enter into sin's secrets; I will only say thus much to these persons, those that now employ their parts in the ways of sin, God will hereafter employ his wisdom to contrive a punishment for them; and when the infinite wisdom of God shall contrive a punishment, and the infinite power of God inflict it, there will be a proportionable recompence for all their guilt. So much to discover those several sorts and degrees of false wisdoms that are in the world.

CHAP. XIV.

An exhortation to beware of those sins which quench the grace of God's fear, by way of defect.

LET us from hence;—be persuaded to beware of those sins which quench this grace of God's fear;—excited to the cherishing of this grace in our hearts. Beware of those sins which quench this grace, and those fall under a double consideration, either; those sins which by way of defect quench this grace; or those sins which by way of excess, do likewise exterminate this grace out of the soul.

1. Those sins which by way of *defect* quench this grace, and here I would mention, *hardness of heart*, Prov. 28. 14. "happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief;" there is the opposition that is made between them. This hardness of heart

1. Is either *natural*, that which is an hereditary disease: all men have a heart of stone. This every one brings into the world with him; and it is a wonder of grace, if every one doth not carry it out of the world with them.

2. *Voluntary*, acquired by frequent acts of sin; men first wound their consciences, and then they sear them by repeated acts of sin. As you know that ice which at first is so tremulous and feeble that it will not bear a pebble, yet by a few days freezing will bear a cart; so it is here,

3. This hardness is *penal*, inflicted by God himself, not by the infusion of sin, but by the suspension of grace; and this is contrary to the fear of God, by way of defect. The scriptures represent this hardness to us by three similitudes; first, sometimes by an iron sinew in the neck, and so it connotes an inflexibility to God's commands; sometimes by the hardness of an adamant, and so it implies an impenetrableness to the motions of God's Spirit; sometimes by a brawn upon the heart, by a fatness, and so it imports an insensibility of God's threatenings. Now there are two parts of it wherein it opposeth God's fear;—security, which is a privation of God's fear;—presumption, when there is an accession of boldness.

Security, is one branch of hardness of heart; this is a privation of God's fear. I mean by security, this, when a sinner can sleep out all God's thunder; when all the threatenings of the word are to a soul as colours to a blind man: for who is so blind as he that will not see? When they are as a tale to a deaf man; and who is so deaf as he that will not hear? When a person is like that secure emperor, who when he was in the midst of his enemies, yet he proclaimed *altum silentium belli*, deep silence of war, there must be no discourse of arms: so it is with such a soul, the denouncing of judgments, and the threatenings of the word, and the decision of the great and terrible day, are to such spirits but as a vain fancy, as if there was no existence of these things but in the brain of him that preacheth them. This is that secure wretch who wants the fear of God.

Allow me next to mention *presumption*, when there is not only a mere privation of fear, but an accesion of boldness. Presumption is security strained up to the highest pitch, it is security dipped in a scarlet dye. Now there is a three-fold presumption;—It is either in the thought;—Or in the discourse;—Or in the actions of men; and it proportionably opposeth the fear of God.

1. In the *thoughts*. There are *verba mentalia*, whispers of the soul, which are not intelligible by the world. There are presumptuous principles according to which men live, and this in scripture is the voice of the heart, Psalm 50. 21. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself;" what is the meaning of that? The principle that governs the life of a wicked man is this, that God is like unto himself, he draws such a pattern of God as is conformed to his own fancy, he makes a God all of mercy, and sets up this idol in his soul, and bows down himself to it; he robs one attribute to enrich another; he takes away God's justice and holiness, that he may enlarge his goodness; this is presumption in thought, such a person doth not fear God.

2. There is a presumption in our *discourses*, and that principally in two things: (1.) When the sinner after his commission of sin justifies it; he is not only an actor of sin, but a defender of it. That man enters into the lists with God that doth defend what he hates; or (2.) when a person is arrived to such a degree of presumption as to boast of his sin. And yet how many are there among us who are thus presumers, that boast how many pliant souls they have drawn to their snares, how many weak brains they have conquered by their cups? These are persons that venture upon a double damnation, first for committing sin, and then for boasting of it. What an irrational thing is it for a man to boast of his sins? It is as if an imprisoned felon should boast of his fetters, as if an infected person should boast of his plague-sores, as if a possessed person should boast of his devil; yet we have a number of those persons amongst us, who are heirs to those prostitutes, the very naming of whom drew tears from St. Paul's eyes, who 'glory in their shame.'

3. There are those who are presumptuous sinners in their *actions*. Now of these there are two sorts; (1.) Such as venture upon sins notwithstanding all those flashes of brimstone which

are cast upon their faces; such as run to the forbidden fruit, notwithstanding those angels (I mean the preachers) who stand with flaming swords in their mouths, threatening God's judgments against those that venture upon them. These are the presuming wretches who look upon themselves, or at least-wise demean themselves, as if they were stronger than God, as if they were able with an army of lusts, to oppose God with millions of angels; these want this fear. We read in the scripture concerning some persons, who had brows of brass, and faces harder than a rock, who were impenetrable against all God's threatenings; and we have a generation of such among us, who will tear the blessed name of God, and dismember his Son between their teeth: and notwithstanding all the threatenings of the word, yet they venture upon their lusts as if they were unconcerned in these things; these are they which have conquered conscience, that have frustrated all the methods of grace, and when ministers excite them to use the reason of men and the faith of christians, they turn all into a mock and a jeer. These certainly are eminently void of the fear of God, and in their kind they are worse than the devils themselves; for the "devils tremble" under the apprehension of this truth, that "God will come to judge them," Jam. 2. 19. but these daring wretches venture upon their lusts, notwithstanding all warnings that are given to them. (2.) The presumer in his actions, is he that doth encourage himself in sin, by the patronage of grace; who discourseth thus in his heart, though not with his tongue (notwithstanding those various judgments and threatenings which are made known by the ministers of the gospel) certainly there is mercy with God, and he that made them will save them; certainly the rule of the last day's account is not so strict as ministers would make it, there will be a greater liberty; and thus they venture upon the ways of sin, and spiders as they are, draw poison from the flowers of mercy itself; this is the presuming wretch that wants the fear of God. Now to such persons, let me only by way of antidote and cure, present these few directions.

First. Seriously reflect upon those representations which the scripture makes of God, as a God of immaculate holiness, of impartial justice, of infinite power; and press these upon your souls. As a God of immaculate holiness. In that attribute all other terrible attributes are rooted; it is the holiness of God that

excites his justice, and arms his power: this is that attribute wherein the creature is most defective, and wherein God doth most excel; and therefore this attribute will produce a fear of God. Do but argue with thyself, that God whose holiness is his glory, before whom the stars are not clean, will that God embrace thee with thy lusts? Certainly the holiness of God is more dear to him than the salvation of ten thousand worlds. So consider God's justice, that justice that must award and decide men to their eternal state; that justice, that is so eagle-eyed, as to discover all thy crimes, with their aggravations. Consider his power, he that is able not only to resolve thee into thy first principles of nothing (for it were happy for thee, if that were thy punishment) but he that can cast body and soul into hell-fire. Let these considerations raise the fear of God in thy soul. There is such a passage in scripture, as this, "O earth tremble at the presence of the Lord." Psal. 114. 7. If the earth which is so vast and durable a body, if the earth which is incapable of sin (only being stained with the impurities of men) if this earth should fear and tremble at God's presence, how much more should sinful man, who is lighter than vanity, sinful man, who hath provoked the eyes of God's glory; who hath brought a curse upon the whole creation, what reason hath a man to fear? Know thus much, there is no greater contempt of God in the world, than not to fear him. I do not wonder to see a superior to slight his inferior; but to see a slave not to fear his prince, this is wonderful; so to see a worm of the earth, a little breathing dust, not to fear an infinite God, this is stupendous.

Secondly. Attend upon an awakening ministry. Ministers should be sons of thunder (not of music) to excite the fear of God in the hearts of men. I confess I look upon nothing as more dangerous and deadly, than a general, soft and toothless ministry: but for the ministry that is full of life and spirits, that ministry which is answerable to the heart of God, this is the proper means which is designed by the Lord for the raising of this fear in men.

Thirdly. Exercise faith in God's threatenings. Believe the truth of the threatenings, and the power of the threatener. Do not fancy as if God would lose a dram of his truth for the saving of the world, as if he would recede from the sharpness and seve-

rity of his threatenings. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle" of all the threatenings of the "law of God shall pass away." Know that the law which was first given in fire, shall be at the last required in fire; and then secure and presumptuous sinners shall find all their hopes and all their bravadoes vanish. To conclude, impress this upon your spirits, how infinitely dangerous it is for a person not to fear God until he feels his displeasure? What a sad thing it is for a man, when death is the first symptom of his disease? So how inexpressibly tragical is it when a soul never fears God till he feels him? Then it will be too late to have this passion raised in your hearts. The judgments of God to many persons, are like a sleeping lion, that awakes and destroys at once; and therefore fear him that is able thus to deal with you.

CHAP. XV.

Opening slavish fear in respect of God, or men, or ourselves; which opposeth the fear of God by way of excess.

ii. I Now proceed to the next sort of sins, that I shall caution you against, and they are those which oppose the fear of God by way of *excess*. The fear of God stands between these sins, as a temperate diet opposeth either an immoderate repletion, or else an unnecessary and a prejudicial abstinence: for as a moderate diet keeps the body in its strength and activity, whereas an immoderate repletion produceth surfeits, fevers, and other fatal diseases; so on the other side, total abstinence instead of preventing diseases starveth the body: so doth the fear of God, when it is in that temper that the scripture requires, keep the soul active, vigorous, and enlarged in the ways of obedience; but when this fear shall be excessive, then it produceth many deadly

distempers in the soul; or when this fear is absolutely lost, the soul (if I may so speak) is starved, and loseth its life and strength. Now in the excess there is a two-fold fear, which opposeth the fear of God. First. Slavish fear; Secondly. Superstitious fear.

First. Let us consider *slavish fear*, which is of three sorts;—That slavish fear which is merely terminated upon the wrath of God;—That which respects the power of man;—That which I may call pusillanimity, that proceeds from the apprehensions of the insuperable difficulties which do attend a religious state.

These are the three sorts of slavish fear, which I shall endeavour to depress; in respect of God, men, and ourselves.

1. A slavish fear in *respect of God* is this, when the soul is only taken up with the apprehensions of those treasures of wrath which God is able to pour forth upon it. A fear that looks upon God as an irreconcileable enemy, or as an implacable judge; this fear I would endeavour to eradicate, by presenting these considerations.

(1.) It springs from infidelity, when faith is not exercised upon those representations of God, which the scripture makes known. In the gospel the mercy of God is represented to us as that which is his glory, his delight, his treasure. As his mercy must not violate his justice, so his justice must not devour his mercy. His mercy is an attribute as essential as his righteousness. But now when the soul disbelieves this, then it fears God as a slave fears his master.

(2.) This slavish fear it is accompanied with dishonourable thoughts of God. It is a disparagement to his essence; such a person represents God to himself under the notion of a tyrant, he draws him with a black coal, and this is no less than blasphemy. For a despondent sinner to think thus with himself, that God will exact perfection from a man answerable to the measure of an angel, or that God will triumph in the mere torments of his creatures, or that he delights in their ruin, it is a sin equal to atheism; yea, it is in some respects worse than atheism. Atheism is a denial of the Deity; but for one to entertain such apprehensions of God, it is the reproach of the Deity. I remember what I read of Plutarch (saith he) 'I had rather posterity should say there never had been such a man as Plutarch, than to say, there had been one Plutarch that was so cruel, that

he would devour his own children.' I know it is an inexpressible sin for a man to deny a Deity; on the other side, to grant a Deity, and to entertain such thoughts of him ariseth to the same degree of wickedness. Such a person doth absolutely discharge the gospel, as if there were no chancery or moderation for the lapses and unavoidable infirmities of the best men.

(3.) Wherever this slavish fear is, it doth corrupt all the services which proceed from him in whom it is. For the bane of all the religion in the world is either mercinariness, or slavishness; when a man serves God merely that he may obtain worldly blessings, or when a man serves God as the heathens served the devil, *ne noceat*, lest he should hurt them. Christians should be led by sanctified affections; but this fear kills all delight. They come to the duties of religion as bears to a stake, and they go from them as birds out of a snare; what is the reason of it? Because they have such apprehensions, and such a slavish fear of God.

(4.) When it riseth to extremity, it produceth hatred against him, both in respect of his essence and attributes. A felon wisheth that there was no judge, no law; so doth this person that slavishly fears God, he wisheth that God were not omnipotent, that he might not have power to torment him; that he were not omniscient, that he might not know the evil of his heart and ways. Hatred always strikes at the being of that which is hated; when fear degenerates into despair, and that despair causeth hatred, that hatred at the last will cause a person to curse the fountain of blessedness: for thus it is in hell.

(5.) This slavish fear renders a sinner completely miserable in this world. All errors about the nature of God are pernicious and dangerous; but those errors which are accompanied with fear, they are like a wound which hath an inflammation in it, it will bring death more painful and more speedy; so it is here, those errors concerning the nature of God, which are accompanied with such a fear of his justice, as if there were no reserves of mercy for relenting and reforming sinners; these beget an hell upon earth, bring a soul into the very suburbs of hell, into the confines of eternal darkness; and therefore labour against this fear. I do not speak against the fear of God's justice all this while, I would only rectify that fear, not abolish it; let us so fear God's justice as to hate sin, and yet still so as to love his

mercy and goodness. The sum is this, the fear of God should have for its circumference the reverence of God and all his attributes, for its centre it should have godliness and practical holiness; the limit of our fear should be an awful regard of God's excellencies and perfection, and the end of our fear should be a constant obedience to him; then our fear is angelical when it is kept within its bounds. So much for the first branch, that slavish fear which is terminated upon God's justice.

2. There is a servile fear which respects the *power of man*, when the soul is so possessed with the fears of the power of the creature, that it draws back to destruction, that it dares not own its faith in the face of a tyrant: and to such persons, that they may correct their fear, I shall present three considerations.

(1.) Consider, as the throne endures no rivals, so that fear which is a homage and tribute which we should pay only to the Sovereign Creator of the world, should not be given to the creature. He that doth immoderately fear the creature, dethrones God and deifies man. It is no less than sacrilege to alienate the affections from God; and it is no less than idolatry, to place our affections inordinately upon the creature, Isa. 8. 12, 13. "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid; sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." As the beams of the sun discourage the fire, and will not suffer it to burn; so will the fear of God swallow up all our fear of the creature; the greater fear will devour the less.

(2.) Consider, this immoderate fear of the creature is the root of apostacy. Such a man will rather save his life than his soul, such a person carries his faith about him at the mercy of every one that threatens to kill him: for this is a maxim, he that is a coward will be an apostate. That man doth not fear God, that dares not die for him; that man that hath not got above the love of life, and above the fear of death, will never be a martyr, he will never hold out for God; therefore such a person is in the very next degree to an apostate.

(3.) Consider the unreasonableness of this fear. To fear the sentence of a man when God is our Judge; to fear the power of man, when God is our defence; to fear death, which is but the entrance into an eternal life; what is this, but as little children,

to fear the vizard more than the man that wears it? Austin speaks excellently concerning this temper, saith he, these persons *Timent carcerem, non timent gehennam; timent cruciatum temporalem, non pœnas ignis æterni; timent modicum mori, non æternum mori;* that is, they fear the prison, but they fear not hell; they fear temporal torments, but they fear not the flames of unquenchable fire; they fear the first, but not the second death; and is not this an unreasonable thing? There is one scripture which I shall desire to press upon such persons, Rev. 21. 8. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the scond death." Here the fearful are placed in front of those which shall be cast into the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone for ever. This is the second sort of slavish fear, which I would depress.

3. Another sort of slavish fear which should be eradicated, is this, that fear which some persons take up from the *apprehension of insuperable difficulties that attend a religious state;* like the Israelites that would not venture upon the paradise of Canaan, because it was defended by giants. So there are many persons among us, that if you could look into their hearts you would find this principle; they consider the weakness of their natures, the slipperiness of their places, and the instability of their wills; the rage of their affections, and the frequency of temptations, and from thence they thus argue, I shall never be able to conquer all these; therefore since I shall not be able to attain the prize, I will venture no charges; and since I cannot finish a religious course, I will not begin it; and thus they waste and melt away their days in discouraging fears or worldly business. Sometimes possibly they will make a trial, but they find if they are resolute one day, they are staggering the next; if they are strong one day they are weak another, and at best like Peter, when he was walking upon the water, he slipped with one foot and sunk with the other: therefore they are of the temper of those in the prophet Jeremiah, "they said there was no hope, and therefore they will follow their own ways;" Jer. 2. 25. I shall never conquer these lusts, never be able to perform these duties, therefore I will sit still, and go no further. To such persons I would offer these three considerations.

(1.) Do you not believe that there are degrees of torments in hell? And therefore, supposing this granted, that you cannot attain to that perfection which God requires, will you therefore loosen the reins to all wickedness? A cooler hell is a kind of heaven; there are some lashed with scorpions, others whipped but with rods, I speak as to the degrees of torment.

(2.) Was ever the Spirit of God defective to those that sincerely endeavoured? Hath not God promised to give his Spirit to those that ask it?

(3.) Is not divine grace strong enough to conquer the power of hell, and the deceitfulness of our hearts? Is not the efficacy of the divine nature sufficient to repel temptations, and to resist corruptions? Consider, will a small candle when it is enlightened scatter all the darkness that is about us; and will not a beam of grace in the soul scatter and triumph over temptations and corruptions? Sure I am that sin is not an infinite evil in itself; but grace hath an infinite power, there is an omnipotency goes along with it. And therefore it is very great madness for a person to say thus, I will not endeavour against my corruptions, because I fear I shall never get the victory over them; it is just as if a man in the midst of a great storm, for fear of it should leap into the sea, this you know were madness: so for a man, because he fears he cannot by his own power and strength, get victory over his corruptions; therefore he will leave himself to the swing of them. Suppose a man when he is half a mile distant from his enemy, should draw his sword and brandish and flourish it in the air, as if he would wound him by these flourishings, you would look upon this man as mad: but if this man should mount an ordnance, and level it against his enemy, and then should shoot at him, you would think this were but reasonable; although the act of shooting be the man's, the force of the act proceeds from the powder, fire, and cannon, which discharge the bullet. So for a man indeed to resolve against his lusts by his own power, and by the strength of his own resolutions, this can do no good: but for a man by the sword of the Spirit, and by the strength of Christ, to go out against his corruptions; this is as the discharging of a cannon, there is some reason to expect that execution should be done, because such a person is carried forth by the power of God. Thus I have opened the first head

of those sins which oppose the fear of God by way of excess, and that is slavish fear.

CHAP. XVI.

Of superstitious fear, in respect of things natural, casual, and religious, which do oppose the fear of God by way of excess.

Secondly. THERE is a *superstitious fear*, which likewise by way of excess, doth oppose the fear of God. I shall rank this under three heads;—Superstitious fear in respect of things natural;—Superstitious fear in respect of things casual;—Superstitious fear in respect of things religious.

1st. In respect of things natural: and here I shall principally touch upon two things, both which are evident to experience.

1. The superstitious fear, which many persons do exercise in reference to those eclipses, or natural changes which may be in the heavens. We have had in our times a large experience of the vanity of men's fears in that respect. Jer. 10. 2. "Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them." When the children of Israel were to be transported into Babylon among the Chaldeans, who were most skilful in those arts, then doth God fortify them against judicial astrology, and bids them not to be dismayed at the signs of the heavens. I confess, this is an heathenish fear; but alas we find, that for these many hundred years this hath continued among the christians, notwithstanding those antidotes that have been prepared against it. And what is the reason of it? It is this, because those persons look upon these eclipses and conjunctions of the heavenly bodies to be prodigious, and to portend and import some disastrous and sad events: I shall only say thus much, all

such eclipses proceeding from natural causes, are not in the least prodigious. It is natural, that the sun and moon should meet at determinate seasons; and it is natural that when they do meet, the opacous body of the moon should make a partial eclipse of the sun. It were prodigious indeed, if in the conjunction of these two bodies there should be no eclipse; and therefore for a person superstitiously to fear such things, he may upon the same reason fear sad events every night that ensues, because then the sun is eclipsed from us by the interposition of the earth; and therefore this is a great folly. I confess it was a prodigy, that the sun was darkened at the passion of Christ, for then the moon was not in conjunction with, but in opposition against the sun: and it was a prodigy, when there was darkness among the Egyptians for three days. But here, since all things in this manner proceed from the concatenation that is between causes and effects, there is no reason to tremble. And therefore God, in scripture, doth sometimes deride this fear, and sometimes dissuades from it, sometimes derides it as matter of scorn and greatest vanity, and sometimes dissuades from it and condemns it, as here in the text recited to you.

2. There is a superstitious fear in reference to natural things, and that principally upon the account of dreams; for there are many among us whose fears commence from their fancies, who do not rest while they sleep, but while their reason is asleep their fears are awake: these are the persons that have no dreams but what are accompanied with an interpretation, or with a prediction; and if one event happens to be true, it is a rule for an hundred with them. Now the vanity of such persons the scripture takes notice of, and as an antidote against it, take these two things. (1.) Those that make use of their dreams as a rule for their acts, give the greatest advantage to satan; the reason is this, because he then is able to exercise his power when the creature is unable to resist him. If once you grant that there may be impressions upon your fancy (in dreams) of things that are to come, the devil then takes the reins into his own hands, and he will tempt you when you cannot oppose him. (2.) As you give advantage to satan, so it is the greatest injury to a man's self; for such a soul is under perpetual fear, and makes himself miserable.

2dly. There is a superstitious fear in reference to casual things (and this is beneath a sermon, but yet necessary for some persons) some are transported with every trifling contingency; if the salt falls towards them, or if a hare crosseth them in the way, presently they grow pale or red upon it, as if there were some evil that must ensue; this is the quintessence of folly.

3dly. And principally, there is a superstitious fear in reference to religious things, and this opposeth the fear of God, and it consisteth usually in one of these two things.

1. When a person is afraid to do that which God allows, or which God commands; and thus men make more sins than the ten commandments. So we read of the Jews, they fancied the name Jehovah was not to be expressed but only by the high-priest, and that once a year, and that only in the "holy of holies;" and we read of the primitive christians, they were scrupulous about days, months, and meats, as if there were some tie upon conscience which did retrench them from these things.

2. As they are abstemious from what God allows, so they are exact in that which God doth not require, and this is eminently among the papists at this day. I might largely speak of this sin, I will only say thus much of it;—All the services of a superstitious person are unacceptable to God;—All the services of a superstitious person are odious to him.

(1.) A superstitious person's services are unacceptable to God. When a man is carver of his own obedience, he doth enter upon God's right, and so his services are unacceptable. There is an expression in Col. 2. 18. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." There are two things which we may observe there, one is from that expression, a voluntary humility; the word in the Greek Εμβατεύων is a voluntary in humility, one that is a volunteer that offers up will-worship to God, the apostle saith he doth intrude into those things which he hath not seen. The word which we translate, intrude may (with a great correspondency to the original notation of the word) be rendered thus, invading; that is, such a person doth invade God's right, and insolently set foot upon God's possession, as actors in a tragedy, where they went in a lofty and strutting manner; from

thence the Greek word signifies to enter upon the right of another; such a person invades God's right, and thereby renders all his services unacceptable.

(2.) The services of a superstitious person are odious to God. There is one scripture which is most convincing, where the Lord speaks concerning the sacrifices of the Jews, and shows how he doth dislike them, "he that offers a sacrifice is as if he cut off a dog's neck, and he that makes an offering as if he offered swine's blood;" Isa. 66. 3. where the Lord declares, that he looked upon their sacrifices to be no other than mere slaughter, and their priests to be the butchers; for although the substance of their sacrifices were ordained by God, yet because they innovated in the form, all these sacrifices as they were thankless, so they were hateful to God. Certainly this is one of the profundities of satan, to lead a soul by superstitious fear into these practices. And usually you shall observe, that profane youth is turned into a superstitious old age; so that sin which was let out at the gate, returns in at the postern, and poor men work the work of death and hell when they fancy that they are in the way to heaven. As you shall see sometimes a poor dove, when its eyes are sealed and dark, it will mount up to heaven, but alas it is with an undiscerning wing, with fear and trembling; the dove doth not consider that this flight of her's is made as a trail for the hawk to prevail over her. So here, many blind ignorant souls mount up to heaven in their superstitious devotions (as they think) but they are made but a trail for satan. Superstition is the ivy of religion, that seems to embrace it, but it dispirits it, and eats out its sap and moisture: therefore learn to quench and cast this out of the soul. The sum of all is, let us labour to keep alive in our souls an ingenuous and filial fear of God, let us fear his goodness that we may not displease him, let us fear his justice, so as we may not provoke him; let us fear him in all his perfections, let us fear him as the angels fear him, as he is the holy and the pure God; and he that fears God thus, that fear from the imperfection of a man, shall at last be raised to the perfection of an angel; that fear shall be like the sun, whose light breaks forth into greater clearness, till it arrives to perfect day.

THE FOUR LAST THINGS:

VIZ.

DEATH, JUDGMENT,

HEAVEN, HELL,

PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED AND APPLIED:

IN SEVERAL

DISCOURSES.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

RACHEL LADY RUSSEL.

MADAM,

OF all affairs for the compassing whereof men are so diligent and solicitous, there is none of that absolute necessity, and high importance, as the preparation for death and judgment, and the immediate consequence of them, heaven and hell, to obtain the one, and escape the other. This requires the whole man in his best vigour, and should be the work of the day, but it is usually delayed till the melancholy evening of age, or the twilight of death. The trifles of this world divert them from that main business, to which all other things should be subordinate. It equally deserves wonder and compassion, that death which is so constantly in men's view, should be so seldom the matter of their application, when all are of the same glass, made of the same frail natural principles; and no argument is more frequently and pathetically urged upon them.

It is not strange that deep truths, which by the strength and exercise of the mind are drawn like gold out of the mines, have no efficacy upon those that are not capable of understanding them: but the doctrines of death and judgment, heaven and hell, are plain truths, by natural, moral, and divine evidence known to all; yet no more affect men, than a paradox of incredible novelty. If the doctrine of eternal judgment were but a probable opinion, controverted with equal arguments, yet it is a matter of such vast concernment, that reason requires all our possible diligence to avoid an eternal evil, that may be the loss of celestial glory, and the torments of hell: but since it is an in-

fallible truth, as certain as the word of God, it is a miracle to astonish heaven and earth, that men live as carelessly as if they should never die, and die as securely as if they should not live in the next state, to receive the just punishment of their sins. They are fearless whilst death is far off in their thoughts: and when age has snowed upon their heads, that no marks of decaying nature should appear, make their own winter to flourish with another's spring. But it is in vain, for death knows them under their disguise, and will not stay beyond the appointed time. And in that decisive hour, infidelity or presumption hardens men to pass as quietly and boldly, in appearance, into another world, as unfeigned faith, and a regular lively hope in the promises of the gospel. But as deceitful physic stops the fit for the present, that will return more violently and fatally afterwards: so a counterfeit short peace transmits them to everlasting sorrows.

The design of the following discourse is to awaken men, that they may be wise and consider their latter end: to secure an interest in our Redeemer, who has disarmed death of its sting, and made that enemy our friend: and to practise dying every day, by withdrawing their hearts from the vanities of this transient world, that have such a pernicious influence to excite the carnal appetites, and stupify the conscience, which are the true causes of their sin and misery. And what can be more powerful to render them temperate and sober in the use of present things, vigilant and serious in their preparations for their great and final change, than the remembrance that death is immediately attended with judgment, and judgment with blessedness or misery for ever? I know this argument is naturally displeasing, but the usefulness should recommend it to our most solemn and composed thoughts, before all the vain entertainments of the fancy and sensual affections. As herbs of medicinal virtue, that are not pleasing to the sight or smell, yet are valued by the skilful as treasures of health; and preferred before the fairest flowers that are perfumed and painted by nature, so as to excel the richest lustre of Solomon's glory.

The body is in a continual consumption, and no art can long preserve it: but whilst the outward man is irrecoverably declining and wasting, if the inward man be ascending and renewing to perfection, the advantage is incomparable. O how comfortable is it to a holy believer in the parting hour to commit his

spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father! (for thus he is authorized and encouraged by our Saviour's example) and "lay down the flesh to rest in hope:" for Christ is the guardian of the grave, "has the keys of death," and will revive the bodies of his saints incorruptible and immortal, the copies of his own glorious body.

The immediate recompences of eternal judgment, heaven and hell, are worthy of our most attentive and applicative thoughts, that we obtain the one, and escape the other. Heaven is the true happiness of the reasonable creature, and is the first and last in the order of things desirable; the first for its attractive excellence, the last in its consummate fruition. This may be certainly and perpetually enjoyed by all who sincerely and diligently seek it. If in the very different states of life here, there were any incapable of eternal life, or that have another object for their last end, there might be some reason why they should be coldly affected towards celestial happiness, and to justify their sole pretensions to the things of time, wherein their interests are confined: but the offer of heaven regards all that upon God's terms will accept of it. The most sensible inequality, that riches, dignity, or any temporal accident makes between men here, is so true a nothing in comparison of eternal glory, that it makes no difference of one from another as to the obtaining it. For this reason it most nearly concerns every person, "first to seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof," as the only way to ascend to it.

The serious consideration of the everlasting hell prepared for unreformed sinners, is most necessary and useful, though carnal men are extremely averse from thinking on that terrible object. For this is the first motive that turns men from sin to holiness. The joys of heaven being spiritual and divine, have no attractive influence upon the carnal affections, would never convert and reform any; but the torment of fire being most evident and vehement to sense, is strongly represented by the imagination, and moves the affections. How many by solemn and believing thoughts of the unquenchable fire, have felt the miracle upon the three children in the furnace renewed in themselves, their strong cords, the obstinate habits of sin, burnt asunder, and their powers restored to the freedom of duty, the blessed liberty of obedience?

In this respect the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," that directs us in the way to blessedness.

Madam, I shall not attempt the celebrating your Ladyship's virtues, that render you a bright ornament of your sex, and more truly honourable than your noble descent and alliance: but direct my best desires to God, that your family may be a singular and eminent example of the divine favour; that the fading gloss of this world may not deceive you, but "your heart may be above, where your treasure is;" that you may live to God, and your soul for heaven and eternity. I am,

MADAM,

Your Honour's very humble

and faithful Servant,

WILLIAM BATES.

ON DEATH.

HEB. II. 15.

And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

CHAP. I.

The coherence of the text opened; wherein the proofs of the eternal Deity of Christ are clearly alledged from scripture. An account given of the reasons of his incarnation. In what respects the devil is said to have the power of death. The death of Christ frees his people from the tormenting fear of death. An account of death's entrance into the world, in a three-fold respect.

IN the first chapter of this epistle, the proofs of the eternal Deity of Christ are produced with that evidence of scripture-light, that only a veiled heart, obstinate infidelity can resist. The medium which the inspired penman makes use of, is, the comparing him with the angels, the most noble flower of the creation, and showing that he is infinitely dignified above them. This he does by a strong connexion of arguments: first, by his title that is divinely high and peculiar to himself. He is declared by the testimony of the eternal Father to "be his Son," ver. 4, 5. in the most proper and sublime sense: "begotten of him," and therefore having the same essential perfections of the Godhead in their uncreated glory. But the angels are not dignified with this name in any places of scripture, where the ex-

cellency of the angels is in the fullest terms expressed. And that this name is taken from his nature, is clearly proved: because adoration is due to him upon this account, even from the angels of the highest order. "When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him." Ver. 6.

Divine worship is a prerogative inseparably annexed to the Deity, both upon the account of the supreme excellencies of the nature of God, and his relation to angels and men as Creator and Preserver, the fountain of their being and happiness. This, without the most open defiance of his authority, cannot be given to a mere creature; and by the command of God himself is to be performed as a respect due to the filial Godhead. Deut. 6. 13. & 10. 20. The argument proceeds from the name to the offices. "Of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." ver. 7. They are the prime instruments of his providence, most zealous and active to accomplish his pleasure. But the Son is God, not by analogy and deputation, as princes are, nor with a limitation and diminution, as Moses was made "a God to Pharaoh," but absolutely and really as subsisting in the divine nature: and consequently he is the Supreme King, and to him the ensigns of majesty divinely royal are ascribed: "but unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Ver. 8. Whereas the sceptres of earthly kings are often unrighteously managed, and their thrones ruinously fall. There is a further confirmation from his works, that are divinely great and glorious, wherein no creature has any share of efficiency. The making of the world is ascribed to him: "thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." Ver. 10.

The divine attributes, the peculiar character of the Deity, belong to him: eternity and immutability. The most solid parts of the visible creation "shall perish and be changed: but thou remainest, and art the same." His life is an entire, uniform, unchangeable perfection. His glory and felicity are in the same invariable tenour for ever possessed by him. Lastly, the Son sits in that quality "at the right hand of the Father," ver. 13. in the society of empire, as equal to him in power and honour,

commanding all in the visible and invisible world, most easily and irresistibly, though gradually, subduing his enemies to a consummate victory. But the angels, so numerous and powerful, "are ministering spirits," ver. 14. employed for the defence and benefit of the church.

From this summary account we may understand how firmly the divinity of Christ is established in the scripture. For those passages of the prophets, that speak of the God of Israel as Creator, and the sole object of adoration, are directly referred to Jesus Christ. And the name Jehovah, Psal. 97. 9. the majesty of which consists in its being incommunicable, is attributed to him. This is the foundation upon which the whole fabric of the gospel is built. The office of Mediator in the prophetical, priestly, and regal administration, is necessarily joined with the divinity of his person. And the revelation of it from heaven, is as clear as the sun is visible in the firmament. All the difficulties in our conceiving this great mystery of godliness, are but like the shadows that attend the light. And all the heretical subtilties to pervert the sense of such plain and positive texts, are as impertinent as impious.

This being established, the apostle proceeds to give an account of the Son of God's assuming the human nature, and submitting to sufferings and death. This is a divine secret so miraculously strange, that the contrivance was without the compass of the angelical minds, and the discovery of it is only by supernatural revelation; but when revealed, the account of it is so open and consentaneous to reason, as being the most congruous means for the illustration of God's glory in the saving lost men, that the human mind, if not deeply corrupted with the tincture of prejudice, must consent to it, "as worthy of all acceptation."

The substance of his reasoning is this: that it was the product of the most wise, merciful, and righteous counsel of God, that the Saviour of men should have communion with them in their nature, that he might have a right to redeem them by his alliance and propinquity: for "he that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are all one," chap. 2. 11. and that he might undergo sufferings, even to death, for the price of their redemption, and the remedy of their infirmities. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had

the power of death, that is the devil: and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lives subject to bondage."

The devil is said to have the power of death. 1. Because he induces men to commit sin, that meritoriously renders them liable to death. He tempted the first man *cum effectu*, " and was a murderer from the beginning." 2. In that he inspires them with furious thoughts, and inflames their passions, from whence proceed strifes and wars, that efficiently cause death. He is supreme in all the arts of mischief, and always intent upon evil. It is by his instigation that men become like raging beasts, animated and bent on mutual slaughter. 3. Because he is many times the executioner of God's wrath, and inflicts death upon rebellious and incorrigible sinners. It is recorded by the psalmist, that " God cast upon the Egyptians the fierceness of his anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels," Psal. 78. 49. those princes of the air, the instruments of the thunder, and fiery storm of hail that destroyed them. 4. Because he makes death more formidable to sinners, by heightening their guilty fears of God's tribunal. The false spirit tempts men to sin by many blandishments, but afterward he is a severe accuser of them to God, and to themselves. Lastly, This title may signify his tormenting sinners with unrelenting cruelty in hell, which is the second death. Now these evils being the penal consequence of sin, our Saviour by his death appeased the injured justice of God, and thereby destroyed the cruel tyranny of the devil. As the Lamb of God, in the notion of a sacrifice, he overcomes our spiritual enemies. Sin, satan and death, lie vanquished at the foot of his cross. Besides, our Saviour having felt such sorrows and infirmities as are usual to his people, by that correspondence and resemblance between them, is compassionately inclined to relieve them. I shall now insist upon the blessed privilege of believers set down in the text, viz.

That Jesus Christ by his death frees his people from the servile tormenting fear of death.

In prosecuting the point, I shall, 1. Consider the account the scripture gives of death's entrance into the world. 2. Show what the fear of death includes, and the bondage consequent to it. 3. How the death of Christ frees us from the thraldom of that fear. 4. Who are partakers of this blessed privilege. And then apply it.

I. The scripture gives an account of death's entrance into the world, in a threefold respect.

1. As the desert of sin. 2. As the effect of the divine decree. 3. As the sentence of the law.

1. As the desert of sin. The first design of the Creator was his own glory in conjunction with the happiness of man. He was made accordingly holy in perfection, placed in paradise, and his state contained all the ingredients of felicity proper to his nature. He was capable of dying, as sad experience proves; yet no accident from without, no distemper from within had impaired his vigour, and made him actually subject to death without sin. Whilst innocent he was immortal, not from everlasting principles of nature, but by divine preservation, of which the tree of life was the ordained means and sacramental pledge. For God unchangeably loves his own image: and though by his sovereignty and absolute power he may resume the being he gives, yet his goodness and covenant were a sacred assurance that man's happy life should run parallel with his perseverance in his duty. This immortality was not the singular privilege of Adam's person, but had been the inheritance of all his progeny. But he soon revolting from his just obedience, of immortal became mortal, and according to the original establishment of propagation, transmitted his nature with the guilt and poison of sin to all his posterity. "Thus by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5. 12. As his obedience had been rewarded, so his rebellion is punished in all that naturally descend from him. From hence it is, that so numerous a part of mankind are cut off before the commission of actual sin. Death enters into the forge of life, and destroys the conception that newly began to live. And what is more righteous than that man when he disobeyed the Author of life, should forfeit his life and blessedness? * The soul voluntarily lost the spiritual life by forsaking God, therefore unwillingly loses the natural life by expulsion from the body. The apostle says, "the wages of sin is death," Rom. 6. 23. not only that of the body, but the death of the soul, which is a dreadful concomitant of it. And from hence we may dis-

* Anima volens perdidit vivere, nolens ergo perdat & vivificare.

cover the false philosophy of the wisest heathens in their opinion of death. * They judged it to be the primary necessity and condition of nature, fixed by irresistible fate: and not understanding the true and just reason of its coming into the world, they could not apply a sufficient remedy against its evil.

2. As the effect of the divine decree respecting sin. This is discovered by revelation in the word of God, and by the real execution of it. "It is appointed to men once to die." Heb. 9. 27. This decree is universal and unrepealable. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh:" Eccles. 1. 4. like the ebbing and flowing of the sea in its stated periods. Nothing can interrupt or frustrate this appointment. There are divers conditions of men, and various ways of living in the world; some are high in dignity, others are level with the earth: some walk in a carpet-way, smooth and easy, others in a thorny and troublesome: some walk on the golden sands, others on the mire: but the same uncontrolable necessity of dying involves all. And whatever the way be, whether pleasant or doleful, yet every one passes in it with equal steps, measured by the same invariable spaces of hours and days, and arrives at the same common end of life. Those who are regarded as visible deities amongst men, that can by their breath raise the low, and depress the lofty, that have the lives of millions in their power; yet when the ordained time is come, as they cannot bribe the accusing conscience for a minute's silence, so neither delay death. "I have said ye are gods, but ye shall die like men."

3. Death is to be considered as the sentence of the law. The reasonable creature was made under a law, the rule of his actions. The moral law directed him how to continue in his holy and blessed state: to which was annexed the precept of not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, only as a mark of his subjection, and for the trial of his obedience. This precept had an infallible sanction by the most high Lawgiver: "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death." Gen. 2. 17. Man did not keep this command of so easy observation, and justly incurred its doom. As sin is the violation of the law, so death

* Hac lege intraverant, ut exirent. *Senec.*

is the violation of the sinner in his nature and felicity retorted from the law.

The deaths of men are very different in their kinds; and are comprised in the words of David concerning Saul: "the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into the battle, and perish." 1 Sam. 26. 10. Sometimes they are cut off by the immediate flaming hand of God, for the more exemplary revenge of sin; sometimes by surprising accidents; sometimes by bloody contentions; sometimes by consuming diseases. But though death be not uniform, yet it is always the execution of the law upon offenders. As of those who are condemned by human justice, some suffer a more easy and honourable death, others a more disgraceful and torturing; some are beheaded, others are crucified, yet all die as malefactors. Thus some die a natural death, others a violent; some by a gentle preparing sickness without reluctation, others die upon the rack by sharp pains: some die attended with their friends, and all supplies to sweeten their passage, others forsaken of all comforters: yet death is the same sentence of the law upon all men. And this, if duly considered, makes it terrible in whatever shape it appears.

CHAP. II.

What the fear of death includes. The passion of fear in general considered. The special causes that make death so fearful. It is an evil universally known. It is certainly future. The bondage of men from the fear of death. The reasons why men are not always under the actual fear of death.

II. THE next thing to be considered is, what the fear of death includes, and the bondage that is consequent to it. This I shall explain and amplify, by considering four things. 1. The nature of fear in general, as applicable to the present subject. 2. The particular causes that render death so fearful. 3. The degree of this fear expressed by bondage. 4. How it comes to pass that men are not always under the actual fear of death, but subject to the revolutions of it all their lives.

1. I will consider the nature of fear in general, as applicable to the present subject. Fear is a passion implanted in nature, that causes a flight from an approaching evil. Three things are requisite to qualify the object, and make it fearful.

(1.) The evil must be apprehended. Knowledge, or at least suspicion, excites fear, by representing an evil that is likely to seize upon us. Till the mind discern the danger, the passions are unmoved: and imaginary evils by the mere apprehension, are as strongly feared as real.

(2.) The evil must be future. For the naked theory of the most pernicious evil does not wound the soul, but the apprehension of falling under it. If reason can open an expedient to prevent an evil, this passion is quiet. And fear precisely regards its object as to come. Present evils induce grief and sorrow: past evils by reflection affect with joy, and give a quicker relish to present felicity. Approaching evils alarm us with fear.

(3.) The evil must be apprehended as prevalent to make it fearful. For if by comparison we find our strength superior, we either neglect the evil for its levity, or determine to encounter it; and resistance is the proper effect of anger, not of fear. But

when an impendent evil is too hard for us, the soul shrinks and recoils from it.

Now all these qualifications that make an object fearful, concur in death.

1st. It is an evil universally known. The frequent funerals are a real demonstration that speaks sensibly to our eyes, that death reigns in the world. On every side death is in our view, and the shadow of it darkens our brightest days.

2dly. It is certainly future. All the wretched accidents of this life, such as concern us in our persons, relations, estates and interests; a thousand disasters that a jealous fear and active fancy will extend and amplify; as they may, so they may not happen to us. And from this mixture of contrary possibilities, from the uncertainty of event, hope, that is an insinuating passion, mixes with fear, and derives comfort. For as sometimes a sudden evil surprises, not forethought of; so, often the evil that was sadly expected, never comes to pass. "But what man is he that lives, and shall not see death?" Psal. 89. 4. Who is so vain as to please himself with an imagination of immortality here? Though men are distinguished in the condition of living, yet all are equal in the necessity of dying. Human greatness in every kind, nobility, riches, empire cannot protect from the sudden and sovereign hand of death, that overthrows all. The most conspicuous difference in this world is between the victorious, and the vanquished prostrate at their feet: but death makes them equal. Then the wretched captive shall upbraid the proud conqueror, "art thou become weak as me? Art thou become like us?" The expressions of scripture concerning the frailty of man, are often literally and precisely verified: "he is like the grass, in the morning it flourishes and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth."

3dly. Death is a prevalent insuperable evil: hence the proverbial expression, "strong as death that subdues all, cruel as the grave that spares none." It is in vain to struggle with the pangs of death. No simples in nature, no compositions of art, no influence of the stars, no power of angels can support the dying body, or retain the flitting soul. "There is no man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war."

Eccles. 8. 8. The body sinks in the conflict; and "Death feeds on its prostrate prey in the grave.

2. I shall consider more particularly the causes that render death so fearful to men: 1. In the apprehension of nature. 2. In the apprehension of conscience.

1. In the apprehension of nature, death hath this name engraven in its forehead, *ultimum terribilium*, the supreme of terrible things, upon several accounts.

(1.) Because usually sickness and pains languishing and tormenting, make the first changes in the body, and the natural death is violent. This Hezekiah complained of with a mournful accent, "He will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night thou wilt make an end of me. I reckoned till morning that as a lion, so will he break all my bones." Isa. 38. A troop of diseases are the forerunners of this "King of terrors." There is a preceding encounter, and sometimes very fierce, that nature feels the cruel victory before it yields to this enemy. As a ship that is tossed by a mighty tempest, and by the concussion of the winds and waves loses its rudder and masts, takes in water in every part, and gradually sinks into the ocean: so in the shipwreck of nature, the body is so shaken and weakened by the violence of a disease, that the senses, the animal and vital operations decline, and at last are extinguished in death.

(2.) Death considered in the strictest propriety, as destructive of the natural being, that is our first and most valuable good in the order of nature, is the just object of fear. The union between soul and body is very intimate and dear, and like David and Jonathan they part unwillingly. Nature has a share in the best men, and works as nature. St. Paul declares, "we would not be unclothed," not finally put off the body, but have it glorified in conjunction with the soul. Our blessed Saviour, without the least impeachment of the rectitude and perfection of his nature, expressed an averseness from death, and with submission to the divine will desired a freedom from it. His affections were holy and human, and moved according to the quality of their objects.

(3.) The natural consequents of death render it fearful. Life is the foundation of all natural enjoyments; and the loss of it induces the loss of all for ever. It is from hence that such evils as

are consistent with life, and deprive us only of some particular content and pleasure, are willingly chosen rather than death. The forfeiture of estate, the degrading from honour, the confinement to a perpetual prison, the banishing from our native country, are less penalties than death.

There is a natural love of society in man, and death removes from all. The grave is a frightful solitude. There is no conversation in the territories of darkness. This also Hezekiah in his apprehensions of death speaks of with tears: "I shall see man no more in the land of the living." Isa. 38. 11. As in the night the world is an universal grave, * all things are in a dead silence; palaces, courts of justice, temples, theatres, schools, and all places of public conversation are shut up; the noise and rumour that keeps men in continual observation and action ceases. Thus when the sun of this present life is set, all the affairs and business, all the vain joys of company, feasting, dancing, music, gaming, cease! Every one among the dead is confined to his sealed obscure cell, and is alone an entertainment for the worms.

The psalmist saith of princes, "Their breath goeth forth, they return to the earth, in that very day their thoughts," their glorious compassing thoughts, "perish." This the historian observes was verified in Julius Cesar: after his assuming the imperial dignity, he thought to reduce the numerous laws of the Romans into a few volumes, comprising the substance and reason of all; to enrich and adorn the city of Rome, as was becoming the regent of the world; to epitomize the works of the most learned Grecians and Romans for the public benefit. † And whilst he was designing and pursuing these, and other vast and noble things, death surprised him, and broke off all his enterprises.

At the terrible gate that opens into eternity, men are stripped of all their honours and treasures, "and as naked as they come into the world, go out of it. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. For when

* Dies moritur in noctem, & tenebris usquequaq; sepelitur; funestatur mundi honor, omnis substantia de nigratur, sordent, silent, stupent cuncta, ubiq; justitium est. *Tertul. de Resurrect. Car.*

† Talia agentem atq; meditantem, mors prævenit. *Sueton.*

he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him." Psal. 49. 16, 17. Death equally vilifies, makes loathsome and ghastly the bodies of men, and reduces them to sordid dust. In the grave the * dust is as precious and powerful of one as of another. Civil distinctions are limited to the present time. The prodigious statue in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, Dan. 2. 32, 33, 34, 35. while it was upright, the parts were really and visibly distinct: "The head was of fine gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay: but when the stone cut out without hands, smote the image upon the feet, then were the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff the wind carries away." Who can distinguish between royal dust taken out of magnificent tombs, and plebean dust from common graves? Who can know who were rich and who were poor, who had power and command, who were vassals, who were remarkable by fame, who by infamy? "They shall not say this is Jezebel," 2 Kings 9. 37. not know this was the daughter and wife of a king. The king of Babylon, styled Lucifer the bright star of the morning, that possessed the first empire in the world, was degraded by death, humbled to the grave, and exchanged all his glorious state for worms and putrefaction. "The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." Isa. 14. 11. In short, death separates men from all their admired charming vanities. Now considering man merely in the order of nature, what reflection is more fearful and tormenting, than the necessity, that cannot be overruled, of parting for ever with all the delights of life? Those who have ascended to the throne, that are arrived at the height of temporal happiness, what a melancholy prospect is before them of death and the dark grave? When all things conspire to make men happy here, the sensitive faculties and their fruitions are ebbing and declining, till they

* As our divine poet expresses it.

The brags of life are but a nine days' wonder;
And after death the fumes that spring
From private bodies, make as big a thunder
As those that rise from a huge king.

Herbert.

sink into death, the whirlpool that will shortly swallow them up for ever. This renders the thoughts of mortality so frightful, and checks the freest enjoyments of carnal pleasures.

2. Death is fearful in the apprehension of conscience, as it is the most sensible mark of God's wrath, that is heavier than death, and a summons to give an account of all things done in this life, to the Righteous Judge of the world. "It is appointed to all men once to die, and afterward the judgment." Heb. 9. 27. The penal fear is more wounding to the spirit than the natural. When the awakened sinner presently expects the citation to appear before the tribunal above, where no excuses, no supplications, no privileges avail, where the cause of eternal life or death must be decided, and the awards of justice be immediately executed; O the convulsions and agonies of conscience in that hour! when the diseased body cannot live, and the disconsolate soul dare not die, what anxieties surround it? This redoubles the terrors of death, that the first transmits to the second that was figured by it. O the dismal aspect of Death riding on a pale horse, with hell the black attendant following. This fear surprised the sinners in Sion. "Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who among us can remain with everlasting burnings?" This made a heathen, the governor of a province, to tremble before a poor prisoner: "While Paul discoursed of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." Acts 24. 25. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who lives for ever, and can punish for ever." Heb. 10. 31. None is so powerful as God, nothing so fearful as the guilty conscience.

3. The degrees of this fear are expressed by bondage. This passion, when regular in its object and degree, is excellently useful: it is a wise counsellor and faithful guardian, that plucks off the mask from our enemies, and keeps reason vigilant and active to prevent a threatening evil, or to sustain it in the best manner. It is observable in the brute creatures, that the weak and fearful are most subtile and ingenious to secure themselves, and supply the want of strength with artifice. But when fear is inordinate, it is a tyrannous master, that vexes the weary soul, and hinders its free and noble operations. Cesar chose rather to be exposed to sudden death, than to be continually harassed with fear how

to avoid it. * The Greek word implies the binding of the spirit, that causes an inward slavery. And in the apostle's writing "the spirit of fear, and the spirit of bondage," Rom. 8. 15. † 2 Tim. 1. 7. ‡ are equivalent. Ishbosheth, when Abner provoked by the charge about Saul's concubine, imperiously threatened to translate the kingdom to David, was struck "with such a fear, that he could not answer Abner a word." 2 Sam. 3. 10, 11. The sudden passion stifled his reply, and reduced him to a defenceless silence. Now the fear of death, as it is remiss or vehement, such are the degrees of bondage from it.

(1.) It imbitters the enjoyments of the present life, and makes the most prosperous in the world, "even in the fulness of their sufficiency, to be in straits." Though the senses are pleased with the quick sweetness of change from one object to another, yet the soul cannot have a delightful undisturbed fruition, foreseeing that the stream of pleasure will issue into the dead sea. "Truly light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun." Eccles. 11. 7. But how short is this life with all its pleasures, in comparison of "the days of darkness" that follow. Now though it is our best wisdom and truest liberty to rejoice "in this world as if we rejoiced not," and frequently to meditate on the cooling doctrines of "death and judgment," to repress the transports of the voluptuous appetite; yet since the comforts of this life are liberally indulged to us by the love of God, to be the motives of our grateful and affectionate obedience, to sweeten our passage to heaven, we may with tranquillity of spirit make a pure and cheerful use of them in his service: and it is an oppressing bondage when the disquieting anxious fears of death hinder our temperate enjoyment of his favours and blessings.

(2.) The fear of death oppresses the souls of men under a miserable bondage to the devil; for his dominion is maintained by the allurements and terrors of the world. Though men do not explicitly acknowledge his sovereignty, yet by voluntary yielding to his pleasing temptations, they are really his slaves. And the apprehension of temporal evils, especially of death, dressed up in

* Præstat semel mori quam semper timere. Δεος from δεω.

† Πνευμα δουλειας. ‡ Πνευμα δουλειας.

a frightful representation with its bloody pomp, is the strongest snare to the soul. Prov. 29. The faint-hearted prove false-hearted in the time of trial: for the timorous spirit being wholly intent how to avoid the incursion of a present evil, forgets or neglects what is indispensably to be done, and thinks to find an excuse in the pretended necessity. How many have been terrified from their clearest duty and resolved constancy? To escape death they have been guilty of the most insufferable impieties, by renouncing God their Maker and Saviour, and worshipping the devils for deities. Every age presents sad spectacles of many "that choose iniquity rather than affliction," Job 36. 21. that relinquish their duty, and by wicked compliances save their lives, and lose their souls. Carnal desires, and carnal fears are the chains of hell, that retain men satan's captives. But what folly, what madness is it, for the avoiding the impotent fury of the creature, to venture on the powerful wrath of God, that exceeds all the terrors that can be conceived by fear? This renders them more brutish than the horse, that starting at his shadow, springs over a desperate precipice. "The fearful are excluded from heaven, and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone for ever." Rev. 21.

(3.) The extreme fear of death and judgment dejects and discourages the soul from the use of means to prevent eternal misery, and induces a most woful bondage. Fear anticipates and exasperates future evils: for as knowledge excites fear, so fear increases knowledge, by the incessant workings of the thoughts upon terrible objects. The fearful mind aggravates the foreseen evil, and distils the poison from all the circumstances and consequences of it. And when the evil is apprehended as insuperable and indeclinable, all endeavours to escape are cut off. * What a philosopher observes of an earthquake, compared with other destructive evils, is true in this case. There may be a safe retreat from fire, from inundations, from storms, from war, from pestilence; but an earthquake astonishes with so violent a perturbation, that stops our flight from the imminent danger: † so the vehement impressions of fear from the approaches of death, and the severe executions upon the sinner after it, distract the

* Nullum malum sine effugio. *Senec.*

† Timor fugam perdidit.

mind, and disable from "flying from the wrath to come." These fears are more heavy by the suggestions of satan, who represents God so terrible in his majesty, inexorable in his justice, and unchangeable in his threatenings, that all hopes of obtaining his favour are lost. As the "Egyptian darkness" was not merely from the absence of the sun, but from feculent vapours condensing the air, that it might be felt: so these dark and fearful expectations of the divine wrath are not only from the withdrawing the light of God's countenance, but from the prince of darkness, that foul spirit. And as we read of the Egyptians, that "no man arose from his place for three days;" as if they had been buried in that darkness, and deprived of all active power and motion: so the despairing soul sits down mourning at the gates of death, totally disabled from prosecuting the things "that belong to its peace." It is hope inspires and warms us with alacrity, encourages our endeavours: despair blunts the edge of our industry. The soul suffers the hardest bondage, and the condition is inexpressibly sad under the tyranny of this fear. O how enthralled, how desolately miserable! Despair does meritoriously and effectually ruin the soul. For whereas there is no attribute more divine, no clearer notion of the Deity than love and mercy; this passion disparages his mercy, as if sin were more omnipotent, than his power to pardon; and all the tears that flow from it, are so far from expiating, that they increase guilt: and whereas the believing view of Christ would as completely and presently recover the soul-wounded sinner, as the Israelites were by looking to the ordained visible sign of their salvation; despair turns away the eye from our deliverer, and fixes it upon misery as remediless and final.

4. How comes it to pass that men are not always under the actual fear of death, but subject to the revolutions of it all their lives?

The seeds of this fear are hid in the guilty breasts of men, and at times, especially in their calamities, break forth and kindle upon them. In their leisure and retirement, intercurrent thoughts of death and judgment sting them by fits, and make them uneasy. The flashes of conscience, like moments of lightning, startle them, but they relapse into their habitual stupidity. And the account will be clear, by considering the following particulars.

(1.) Men are apt to flatter themselves with the hopes of long life, and look upon death at a great distance. Though there be a dying disposition in the youngest and strongest persons, though we live in a world of casualties, and death lie in ambush to surprise us every day, yet we are secure: because evils affect us according to their apprehended nearness. A petty constable that is troublesome and vexatious, is more feared by his neighbours, than the grand signior with all his executioners. As remote objects, though of vast bigness, are lessened to our sight; so through the supposed interval of many years, death is looked on with a diminution of its terror. But when death presents itself before men ready to dispatch them, how formidable is its appearance! Saul, though renowned for his valour, yet when he understood by revelation, that to-morrow he and his sons should be in the state of the dead, "there was no strength in him, but he fell straightway all along on the earth;" 1 Sam. 28. struck through with fear before he was wounded by the arrows of the Philistines. Belshazzar in the midst of his luxury and jollity, attended with a thousand lords, and his herd of concubines, Dan. 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. inflamed with wine, and therefore less capable of fear, yet upon the sight of the fatal hand writing on the wall a few unknown characters, which his guilty conscience (before the prophet Daniel came) interpreted to be the sentence of present death, how fearfully was his countenance changed, pale as a carcass? How suddenly did his blood congeal, and his warmest quickest spirits die in his heart? His whole body was seized by such a vehement trembling, that his joints were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. This is a representation of those who bid defiance to death at a distance: but when the fatal hour is come, and they hear the sentence decreed against them, "God has numbered thy days, and finished them; thou art weighed in the balance," (all thy words and actions, thy thoughts and affections) "and art found wanting;" and thy soul shall be divided from thy body, the one sent to hell to suffer the undying worm of conscience, the other to the grave, to be a prey to the worms of corruption; how are they overcome with horror!

(2.) The continual succession of the pleasures and business of the world divert the mind from the attentive strong contemplation of death and the consequences of it. Pensive thoughts are

unwelcome, and we studiouly endeavour to cancel the memory of such things as afflict us. It is said of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts." The consideration of the holy inspector and judge of their actions is tormenting, therefore they fill their minds with earthly imaginations, to exclude the divine presence. We read of those, who to "put far away the evil day, chaunted to the sound of the viol, and drank wine in bowls." Amos 6. 3, 4. They are rocked asleep with the motion of fantastic vanities. And sleep takes away fear, but gives no safety. * It is recorded of Marius, that after his overthrow by Sylla, he was always in consternation, as if he heard the sound of the trumpets, and the noise of the victorious army pursuing him: and his fears were no longer quiet than whilst charmed with wine and sleep; he therefore was continually drunk, that he might forget himself, his enemy, and his danger. Thus men make a pitiful shift to forget their latter end; and whilst they are following either secular affairs, or sensual pleasures, are unconcerned for what is to be hereafter. But this diversion will shortly be at an end, for in their languishing hours, when the wasted body fails the carnal mind, and sensual desires fail the man, then conscience that spoke with a low voice before, is loud and terrible, and like the rigid exacter in the parable that took his debtor by the throat, requires them to pay what they owe.

(8.) Some are so hardened in infidelity, that the powers of the world to come make no impression on their hearts. They mind but little, and are less affected with invisible things. They fortify themselves with gross thoughts, that the spirit of man vanishes with his breath, that death is the end of this life, and not the beginning of another, "and feed without fear." Place one in the midst of destructive evils, but unseen or not believed, and he is as fearless as a blind person walking on the brink of a deep pit. Indeed there are none less disturbed with the terrors of death, than the eminently good, or the extremely bad: for the one sort have a blessed hope that death will be to them an entrance into life, and live like the angels, "with a joy unspeakable and glorious." The others are sensual and secure as the beasts that perish, having extinguished the fear of eternal future evils, which is the proper passion of reason. The apostle de-

* Ælian.

clares, "That knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (to be reconciled to him, before the season of mercy be expired.) 2 Cor. 5. 11. But those who have suppressed the natural notions of eternal judgment, as they think it beneath their wisdom to be persuaded by the promises of heaven, so beneath their courage to be terrified with the threatenings of hell, and triumph over the ruins of conscience. But though wicked infidels slight the threatenings, they shall not escape the vengeance of God.

We read of Noah, "That being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an ark for the saving of his house." Heb. 11. His fear was the native issue of his faith. But the profane world, in whom sense was predominant, that despised the oracle, and trembled at no judgments but what were acting on the visible stage, "they ate and drank, married and were given in marriage," till swept away by the unfeared inundation. We read that Lot being certified by an embassy of angels, that a deluge of fire would in a few hours pour down from heaven upon Sodom, he most earnestly solicited his sons in law, "Arise, depart out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city:" but they entertained his compassionate advice with derision, "he seemed to them as one that mocked," and were surprised by those fearful flames that dispatched them from a temporal hell to that which is eternal. Thus it was prophesied, "That in the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?" But let them blaspheme and scorn the most sacred and terrible truths, let them perpetuate their excess of riot, and wild mirth while they live; death will come, and judgment as sure as death.

CHAP. III.

How the death of Christ frees us from the tormenting fear of death. By dying he paid our ransom to the injured justice of God, and deprives satan of the legal power he had over us. His death is our redemption from the curse of death. It makes death a blessed advantage to believers. The happiness obtained by death unfolded. It frees the saints from afflicting evils, and sin the cause of them. The highest positive good obtained by death.

III. I Now come to show how the death of Christ frees us from the tormenting fear of death.

For the clearing this, we are to consider, that sin, satan and death, are enemies in combination against man in his mortal state; and the destructive power of satan, and death, is from sin. When man renounced his Creator and natural Lord, he was judicially given up to satan as the executioner of vengeance, and to the power of death. Such is the order, rather the confusion in the world by sin. The empire of satan and death is built on the ruins of our innocence.

Now the Son of God came from his throne in heaven to deliver us: and whereas there are two ways of obtaining freedom from captivity, either by ransom, or by power and rescue, in both respects our deliverance from bondage to these capital enemies, is ascribed to the death of Christ.

It is called our ransom, and that in its strict notion has a respect to captivity: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all." 1 Tim. 2. 6. His life was the full price of our liberty and salvation. God does not pardon sin, and release from punishment by a pure absolute act of his will and authority, as a creditor forgives a debtor; but in such a way as to preserve the rights of justice inviolate. Therefore when man was devoted to death, our Redeemer exchanged conditions with him, and offered "up his precious blood," 1 Pet. 1. 18. as our ransom to God, in the quality of the king and judge of all. Such was the dignity of his person, that the entire world, the heavens and

the earth, with all their inhabitants, are of less value to him, than the basest dross to refined gold. Such was the greatness of his sufferings, Phil. 2. 8. in which the highest degree of obedience, and the lowest degree of humility were conspicuous, as to be a valuable compensation, to obtain "eternal redemption for us."

Now when God the Supreme Judge is satisfied, satan forfeits the right he had to torment us, and is divested of his dominion over our wills; which though justly permitted, was an usurpation upon God's right in man that can never be extinguished. It is said by the apostle, that our Saviour "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" Col. 2. He abolished the use of the ceremonial law, that was an evidence and inditement of their guilt who performed it, and the curse of the moral law: it follows, "and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Our Saviour died victoriously; the tree of infamy on which he suffered, was the trophy of his conquest. His death disarmed satan of his weapons, whereby he subdued us, sin, the law, and death; for though his actual triumph was in his resurrection and ascension to glory, yet it is justly ascribed to his death; for that meritoriously opened the grave at his resurrection, and heaven at his ascension.

And here by the way it is most worthy of observation, that our deliverance from our spiritual and most deadly enemies is equally righteous, as admirable and glorious: for our suffering Saviour appeased the wrath of God, and broke the powers of darkness. "The wisdom and love of God had their designs in his death, as well as the malice and rage of satan; as lines, that are opposite in the circumference, meet in the centre."

And as from the tyranny of satan, so the death of our Redeemer is our redemption from death, as to the curse and final dominion of it; nay, has made it a blessed advantage to us.

1. The curse is removed. Death considered as the wages of sin, is all sting and poison, the consequent of the spiritual death, and the introduction to eternal death. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." 1 Cor. 15. Death hath its wounding power from sin, and sin from the law, that forbids it, that discovers its nature, and enhances the measure of

its guilt, and denounces condemnation for it. Now our Saviour having in our stead subjected himself to death, the penalty of the law for sin, "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. 3. Death inflicted on the saints, has not that relation to the guilt of sin, as to be properly satisfaction to revenging justice. There are no petty payments to be made by our sufferings after his complete satisfaction to God. "The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all." Isa. 53.

It is indeed still a declaration of God's holy displeasure against sin, for that originally opened the way of its coming into the world; and sometimes by the immaturity or manner of it, it is a chastisement upon good men for sin; that is, to make them renew their repentance, and mortify their carnal affections that fasten them to the world. For though after the last act of expiration there is no place for repentance; yet in the approaches of death, the soul is strongly excited by the call of God to review its state, and make solemn preparations to "be found of him in peace." But it is not in a strict sense the malediction and vengeance of the law executed upon them. The serpent is turned into a rod of correction in the hands of our heavenly Father for their good. Heb. 12. As the apostle, speaking of some that for their profaning the Lord's table, were fallen asleep, adds, "that when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." 1 Cor. 10. 33. "A believer shall not be hurt of the second death." Rev. 2.

From hence it is, that in the book of life, the scriptures, the death of the saints is called a sleep. Saint Paul argues, "If we believed that Jesus died and rose again; even so them also that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." 1 Thess. 4. 14. It is observable how the apostle varies the expression, "Jesus died, and the saints sleep in him:" for he sustained death with all its terrors, that it might be a calm sleep to his people. * They

* Annon longe gloriosius fuit, quandoquidem totum pro nobis agebatur, ut non modo passio coporis, sed etiam cordis affectio pro nobis faceret? . Et quos vivificabat mors, nihilominus & trepidatio robustos, & mœstitai lætos, & tædium alacres, & turbatio quietos faceret, & desolatio consolatos? *Bern. Serm. 1. de S. Andr.*

enjoy as perfect a rest in the beds of dust, as ever in the softest down. Stephen in the midst of a shower of stones fell asleep. Believers die in peace. "The righteous is taken from the evil to come; he enters into peace." Isa. 57. 1, 2. Being reconciled to God through the blood of Christ, they are not terrified at his call, but with sweet tranquillity resign their souls unto him. "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen thy salvation." Luke 2. There is a vast difference in God's account, between the death of the righteous and the wicked. As the tabernacle in the wilderness was taken down with care upon their change of station, and delivered to the Levites' charge, in order to the raising of it again with honour; but the house incurably infected with the leprosy, was plucked down with violence, and thrown into an unclean place with execration: thus "the death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord," their bodies are kept in the bosom of the earth, to be raised in glory; and the death of the wicked is accursed. In short, as the wood that Moses cast into the waters of Marah, by a miraculous virtue sweetened them: so the cross of Christ has taken away the malignity and bitterness of death.

2. Death is a blessed advantage, and enriching gain to a believer: it brings him to the possession of that good that incomparably exceeds the evil that remains in it. For the death of a saint is not total; but as in the ceremony of purification from leprosy, one bird was killed, and the other let fly in the open air, the mysterious shadow of the lepers being restored to a state of liberty: thus "when the body dies and returns to the earth, the spirit returns to God, the Father of spirits, and fountain of life." Our Saviour told the Jews, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, that I will give for the life of the world." John 6. 48. The heavenly divine life, that is communicated by the Spirit of Christ to believers, remains entire when the sensitive life is lost. The natural order is, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die:" the supernatural is, there is a time to die, and a time to be born. The death of a saint is a * new birth; the pains of the dying

* Dies iste quem tu tanquam supremum reformidas, æterni natalis est. *Senec.*

body are as throws, whereby the ripened soul is delivered into the "land of the living." The happiness of a saint after death, more particularly will appear by considering;

3. The freedom he obtains from all afflicting evils that are numberless here, and from sin the worst in its nature, and the cause of all the rest. The present world is a labyrinth of thorns, in every state we meet with something to vex us. You may as well count the waves of the sea when enraged by a tempest, as the troubles to which in this mortal open state we are exposed. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." Job 14. 1. A short life, and many miseries, O our unhappy capacity! the body is liable to as many diseases, * as there are members; and the soul to as many perplexities as passions. How often are the scenes and habits changed in the time of one man? He that lives in pleasures, must act the mourner's part, "Our sweetest comforts have hidden stings:" and whatever is most pleasing, may occasion bitter grief. And usually holy men have a greater portion of afflictions here: sometimes by the malignity and violence of the wicked; as under the law, the lamb and the dove were sacrifices, the emblems of innocence, and puity, and meekness, whilst the vulture and the lion, the greedy devourers escaped. The apostle declares of the elect, "They are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son," who traced out the way to heaven in his own blood, and by the cross ascended to the throne. Sometimes more immediately divine providence afflicts them to preserve their spirits from the tainted pleasures of the world, and for other holy ends: but there "is a rest for the people of God in heaven." Besides, there are relics of sin in the best of the saints here. Indeed sin is deposed from sovereignty and rule; the imperious lusts are crucified, but not quite expired. As those that were nailed to the cross in their hands and feet, the parts least vital and most sensible, died a painful and lingering death. "Still the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." As there is a complexion of humours in human bodies, always jarring when they are in the soundest health; and where there is not this active contrariety, either the body is without a soul, a mere carcass, or a glorified body in heaven: so where there is not this internal

* Tempus angustatur ad vitam, dilatatur ad miseriam.

combat between grace and sin, either the man is wholly * carnal, "dead in sins and trespasses;" or wholly spiritual, reigning in heaven. And there is nothing more works on the tender affections of a saint, than to find in himself what is displeasing to God; that still he is under a sad necessity of sinning. What is said concerning an old man wasted and decayed in his drooping years, that "the grasshopper is a burden to him," is true of the new man in a christian; the sins that are counted light in the valuation of the world, are a heavy weight to him. Vain thoughts, idle words, irregular passions, unprofitable actions are motives of heart-breaking sorrow. Now death is to a believer an universal remedy against all the evils of this life: it frees him from all injuries and sufferings, and from sin in all its degrees, from all inclinations and temptations to it. "He that is dead, ceaseth from sin." Death is the passage from this wilderness to the true Canaan, the rest above, that flows with better milk and honey, with innocence and happiness for ever. There is nothing can disturb the peace, or corrupt the purity of the blessed.

4. Besides the privative advantage, the freedom from all the effects of God's displeasure, and the resentments of it, there is the highest positive good obtained by death; "The spirits of just men are made perfect in heaven." The soul is the glory of man, and grace is the glory of the soul, and both are then in their exaltation. All the faculties of the soul are raised to the highest degrees of natural and divine perfection. In this life grace renews the faculties, but does not elevate them to their highest pitch: it does not make a mean understanding pregnant, nor a frail memory strong, nor a slow tongue eloquent, but sanctifies them as they are. But when the soul is released from this dark body of earth, the understanding is clear and quick, the memory firm, the will and affections ardent and vigorous. And they are enriched with divine light and love, and power, that makes them fit for the most noble and heavenly operations. The lineaments of God's image on the soul are first drawn here, but then it receives his last hand. All the celestial colours are

* Omnes homines aut sunt penitus caro & nihil habent spiritus, ii sunt infideles sine regeneratione. Aut sunt tantum spiritus sine carne, ii sunt sancti; qui jam in cœlo æterna fruuntur pace sine pugna. Aut sunt partim spiritus, partim caro. Ii sunt omnes renati per spiritum sanctum in Christo. *Aug. cont. Jul.*

added, to give the utmost life and lustre to it. Here we are advancing, but by death we arrive at perfection.

We shall in heaven be joined to the assembly of saints and angels, our best friends. Love is the law of that kingdom, and perfectly obeyed there. Now how charming is the conversation of one that is wise and holy, especially if the sweetness of affability be in his temper? How pleasantly does time slide away in the company of our beloved friends? We are not sensible of its flight. But what dear satisfaction is it to be united to that chosen consecrated society above, "who love one another as themselves?" Though the angels and saints have different degrees of glory, yet every one is perfectly happy and pleased. As the strings of an instrument differ in the size and sound: some are sharp and high, some grave and deep, others a mean; and from that variety results the harmony of music, so that if every string had judgment and election, it would choose to be what it is: so from the different degrees of glory in heaven, the most admirable and equal order of the divine wisdom appears, that satisfies every one.

We shall be in the glorious presence of God and Christ, "where is fulness of joy, and infinite pleasures for ever." It is said of Abraham, "he rejoiced to see the day of Christ," two thousand years before his coming. When by faith he saw the incarnation of the Son of God, in order to the redemption of men, it put him into an ecstacy. Yet then our Saviour was born to sorrows and miseries. But how ravishing is the sight of our Redeemer, "set down on the right hand of the majesty on high, having purged our sins by himself," and accomplished our salvation? Now we are "absent from God," yet in believing his infallible promise, we "rejoice with a joy unspeakable and glorious:" but how much more joyful is the fruition of them? Here the divine goodness is derived to us through secondary means, that weaken its efficacy; but in heaven the consolations of the Creator are most purely dispensed, and his immediate excellencies are made known.

This blessedness exceeds all our thoughts and explicit desires, and requires the eloquence and experience of an angel to set it forth. The bright sum of it is this, we shall see God in his glory, "face to face," 1 Cor. 13. in the most perfect manner: the sight of his glory shall transform us into his likeness; "we shall

be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3. This shall produce in us the most pure and ardent love; and love shall be attended with inexpressible joy, and that with the highest praises of the blessed God, whose influxive presence is the heaven of heavens.

And that which crowns all is, that the life above is eternal. This satisfies all our desires, and excludes all our fears: for unchangeableness is an inseparable attribute of perfect felicity. The blessed are in full communion with God, "the fountain of life, and Christ the Prince of life." "Because I live," saith our Saviour, "ye shall live also." What can interrupt, much less put an end to the happiness of the saints? The love of God is immutably fixed upon them, and their love upon him. Here their love is subject to decays and gradual alienations; as the needle in the compass, though it always has a tendency to the north pole, yet sometimes it declines and has its variations. But in heaven the love of the saints is directly and constantly set upon God. The light of his countenance governs all their affections. It is as impossible to divert their desires from him, as to cause one that is inflamed with thirst, to leave a clear flowing spring for a noisome puddle. In short, heaven is filled with eternal hallelujahs: for there is no appearance of sin, no shadow of death there: all miseries are vanished, and all that is desirable is possessed by the saints: the circle of their employment is to enjoy and praise the divine goodness for ever.

Now is not the blessed exchange a christian makes of the present life, for that which is infinitely better, sufficient to make death not fearful, nay desirable to him? The regular well-grounded hope of this will compose the thoughts in the nearest approach and apprehension of death: no other principles or resolutions are able to vanquish the terrors of our last enemy. And this happiness was purchased for us by the everlasting treasure of our Saviour's blood. The satisfaction of his sufferings was meritorious, as the merit of his active obedience was satisfying.

CHAP. IV.

The reason why believers die, and are in the state of death for a time, notwithstanding the sting of death is taken away. Sin is abolished by death. Their graces are eminently exercised in the encounter with the last enemy. The natural body is not capable of the celestial life. The resurrection of the saints is delayed till the coming of Christ. The resurrection proved from revelation; and the possibility of it by reason. How the resurrection of Christ is an assurance of the happy resurrection of the saints.

I Shall now resolve an interesting question; how comes it to pass, since believers are freed from the sting of death, that they die, and remain in the state of death for a time?

For this there are several reasons.

1. By this means all the sinful frailties that cleave to the saints in this life, are abolished. "The body is dead because of sin:" Rom. 8. And what is more becoming the wise and holy providence of God, than that as by sin man was at first made subject to death, so by death sin dies entirely for ever. Thus, as in Samson's riddle, out of the devourer comes meat; and our worst enemy is conquered by his own weapons.

2. Death is continued to the saints, for the more eminent exercise and illustration of their graces, for the glory of God, and in order to their future reward. * Faith and love, and patience, are declared in their most powerful operations in our encounter with death. If every saint were visibly and entirely translated to heaven, after a short course of holy obedience; if the wicked did visibly drop down quick into hell, faith would be resigned to sight here. This would confound the militant state of the church with the triumphant. Therefore now "death

* Poterat autem Christus etiam hoc donare credentibus, ut nec istius experirentur corporis mortem: sed si hoc fecisset carni quædam fœlicitas adderetur, minueretur fidei fortitudo. Quid enim magnum erat vivendo eos non mori qui crederent se non morituros? Quanto est majus quanto fortius quanto laudabilius ita credere, ut se speret morituras sine fine victurum? *Aug. de pecc. Mort. Lib. 2.*

happens to the good as well as to the wicked." In the next state they shall be separated by a vast gulph, and an amazing difference. Now faith, whatever the kind of death be that a christian suffers, sees through the thickest clouds of disgrace and misery, the glorious issue. As the illustrious confessor, who was crucified with our Saviour, proclaimed his eternal kingdom in the midst of insulting infidels. And our love to God then appears in its radiancy and vigour, when we are ready for the testimony of his truth, and advancing his glory, to suffer a violent death: or when it comes in a gentler manner, for it is even then terrible to nature, we are willingly subject to dissolution, that we may be united to God in heaven. And our patience has never its perfect work, and is truly victorious, till this last enemy be subdued. Death is the seal of our constancy and perseverance. Now the righteous Rewarder will crown none but those "that strive lawfully," and are complete conquerors. * And how wise and sweet is the economy of the divine providence in this, that the frailty of our nature should afford us a means of glorifying God, and of entitling ourselves by his most gracious promises to a blessed reward?

3. Our Saviour by his invaluable obedience and sufferings, has procured for believers a celestial divine life, of which the natural body is not capable. The apostle saith, "flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." The exigencies and decays of the sensitive nature require a continual relief by food and sleep and other material supplies: but the life above is wholly spiritual, and equal to that of the angels. Therefore till this earthly animal body be reformed and purified, it is not capable of the glory reserved in heaven. This is so absolutely requisite, that those believers, who are found alive at the last day, shall "in the twinkling of an eye be changed," that they may be qualified for it. Now herein the wisdom of God is wonderful, that death, which by the covenant of works was the deserved penalty of sin, by the covenant of grace should be the instrument of immortality: that as Joseph by a surprising circuit was brought from the prison to the principality; so a believer by the grave ascends to heaven. This the apostle, in his divine

* Exercitia nobis sunt non funera, dant animo fortitudinis gloriam: contempta mortis præparant ad coronam. *Cypr. de mortal.*

disputation against infidels, proves in a most convincing manner; "thou fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened except it die." As the rotting of the corn in the earth is necessary to the reviving and springing of it up: so we must die, and the image of the earthly Adam be abolished, that we may be transformed into the image of the Heavenly One.

And to the other part of the question, why the saints remain in the state of death for a time? there is a clear answer. The resurrection of the saints is delayed till Christ's coming to judgment, partly for the glory of his appearance: for what an admirable sight will it be, that the saints of all ages shall at once arise glorified and immortalized, to attend upon our Saviour in the last act of his regal office, and then to make a triumphant entry with him into heaven? And partly, that the established order of providence may not be disturbed: for the changing of our nature into glory, in a sudden and inexplicable manner, cannot be without miraculous power; and if every believer presently after death, were in his glorified body translated to heaven, the world would be always filled with miracles, which were to cease after the sufficient confirmation of the gospel by them. But how long soever the interval be to the resurrection, it shall be with "them that sleep in Jesus," as it is with those that awake out of a quiet natural sleep, to whom the longest night seems but as a moment: so when the saints first awake from death, in the great morning of the world, a thousand years will seem no more to them than to God himself, "but as one day."

I now come to prove, that our Saviour will abolish the dominion of death over the saints.

Whilst the bodies of the saints remain in the grave, they seem to be absolutely under the power of death. The world is a Golgotha, filled with the monuments of its victories. And it may be said to this our last enemy, in the words of the prophet to the bloody king, "hast thou killed, and taken possession?" but we are assured by an infallible word, that the power of death shall be abolished, and the bodies of the saints be revived incorruptible and immortal.

The resurrection is a *terra incognita* to the wisest heathens; a doctrine peculiar to the gospel: some glimmerings they had of the soul's immortality, without which all virtue had been extinguished in the world, but no conjecture of the reviving of the

body. But reason assists faith in this point, both as to the will of God, and his power for the performing it. I will glance upon the natural reasons that induce the considering mind to receive this doctrine, and more largely show how "the resurrection of the just is assured" by our Redeemer.

The divine laws are the rule of duty to the entire man, and not to the soul only: and they are obeyed or violated by the soul and body in conjunction. Therefore there must be a resurrection of the body, that the entire person may be capable of recompences in judgment. The soul designs, the body executes; the senses are the open ports to admit temptations. Carnal affections deprave the soul, corrupt the mind, and mislead it. The love of sin is founded *in bono jucundo*, in sensible pleasures: "and the members are the servants of iniquity." The heart is the fountain of profaneness, and the tongue expresses it. And the body is obsequious to the holy soul in doing or suffering for God; and denies its sensual appetites and satisfactions in compliance with reason and grace. The "members are the instruments of righteousness." It follows then there will be an universal resurrection, that the rewarding goodness of God may appear in making the bodies of his servants gloriously happy with their souls, and their souls completely happy in union with their bodies, to which they have a natural inclination, and his revenging justice be manifest in punishing the bodies of the wicked with eternal torments answerable to their guilt.

And of the possibility of the resurrection, the circular and continual production of things in the world, is a clear demonstration of the power of God for that effect. There is a pregnant instance that our Saviour and the apostle made use of as an image of the resurrection: a grain of corn sowed in the earth, corrupts and dies, and after springs up entire; its death is a disposition to life. The essays of God's power in the works of returning nature, flowers and fruits in their season, instruct us how easily he can make those that are in the dust to awake to life. If the art of man, whose power and skill are very narrow and limited, can refine gold and silver to such a lustre, as if their matter were not * earth digged out of the mines: if from black cinders it can form crystal glasses so clear and shining,

* Nomen terræ in igni reliquit. *Tertul.*

how much more can omnipotency recompact our dust, and reanimate it with a glorious life? Death that dissolves our vital frame does not abolish the matter of our bodies: and though it is corrupted and changed by a thousand accidents, yet it is unperishing; and under whatsoever colours and figures it appears, God perfectly discerns, and will separate it for its proper use.

More particularly, I will show how the resurrection of Christ is an assurance of the resurrection of believers to glory. As our surety he was under the arrest of death; it becoming the holy majesty of God, and conducing to the ends of his government, not to derogate from the dignity of his law, but to lay the penalty upon his Son, who interposed for us. Now having finished the work of our redemption by his sufferings, his resurrection was the just consequent of his passion. And it is observable that his resurrection, though one entire act, is ascribed as to himself, so to his Father, Rom. I. 11. by whose consent and concurrence he rose again. Therefore it is said, "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, since it was impossible he should be holden by it." Acts 2. 24. It was naturally impossible upon the account of the divine power inherent in his person, and legally impossible, because divine justice required that he should be raised to life; partly to vindicate his innocence, for he was reputed, and suffered as a malefactor, and principally because he had fully satisfied God. Accordingly the apostle declares, "he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." Rom. 4. Having paid our debt, he was released from the grave, and the discharge was most solemnly published to the world. It is therefore said, "the God of peace raised him from the dead:" Heb. 13. the act is most congruously ascribed unto God invested with that title, because his power was exerted in that glorious work, after he was "reconciled by the blood of the covenant." Briefly, Our Saviour's victory over death was obtained by dying, his triumph by rising again. He foiled our common enemy in his own territories the grave. His death was a counterpoison to death itself; as a bruised scorpion is a * noble antidote against its venom.

Indeed his death is incomparably a greater wonder than his resurrection. For it is apparently more difficult that the Son of

* Qui sibi ipse pulcherrimum medicamentum. *Celsus.*

God, who originally possesses immortality, should die, than that the human body united to him, should be raised to a glorious life. It is more conceivable that God should communicate to the human nature some of his divine perfections, impassibility, and immortality, than that he should submit to our lowest infirmities, sufferings and death.

Now the resurrection of Christ is the argument and claim of our happy resurrection. For God chose and appointed him to be the example and principle from whom all divine blessings should be derived to us. Accordingly he tells his disciples in a forecited scripture, "because I live, ye shall live also." Our nature was raised in his person, and in our nature all believers: therefore he is called "the firstfruits of them that sleep:" because as the firstfruits were a pledge and assurance of the following harvest; and as from the condition of the firstfruits being offered to God, the whole harvest was entitled to a consecration; so our Saviour's resurrection to the life of glory is the earnest and assurance of ours. He is is called "the first-born among the dead," and owns the race of departed believers as his brethren, who shall be restored to life according to his pattern. He is "the head," believers "are his members," and therefore shall have communion with him in his life. The effect is so infallible, that now they are said "to be raised up together, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Ephes. 2. 6. If his victory over our enemies had been imperfect, and he had saved himself with difficulty and hazard, "as it were by fire," in the apostle's expression, our redemption had not been accomplished: but his passion was triumphant; and is it conceivable that he should leave the saints, his own by so many dear titles, under the power of death? If Moses, the deliverer of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh, Exod. 10. 26. would not suffer any thing of theirs, "not an hoof" to remain in the house of bondage; will our great Redeemer be less perfect in his work? Shall our last enemy always detain his spoils, our bodies, in the grave? This would reflect upon his love and power. It is recorded, to confirm our hopes, how early his power was displayed in forcing the grave to release its chained captives: "and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matt. 27. 52, 53. What better earnest can we

have, that the strength of death is broken? From what he has done to what he is able to do, the consequence is clear. The apostle tells us, "he will raise our vile bodies, and change them like unto his glorious body, by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Phil. 3. 21. Our redemption "will then be complete," Rom. 8. 23. and all the bitterness of death past. The redemption of the soul is accomplished from sin and misery immediately after death: but the redemption of the body is the last in order, and reserved to crown our felicity at the great day. Then "death shall be swallowed up in victory," 1 Cor. 15. abolished for ever.

And O the joyful reunion of those dear relatives after such a divorce! when the body that was so long detained in the loathsome grave, 1 Cor. 15. shall be reformed with all glorious perfections, and be a fit instrument for the soul, and partaker with it in consummate blessedness and immortality. It is said, that "those that wear rich clothing are in kings' houses:" but what are all the robes of costly folly wherein earthly courtiers appear, to the brightness and beauty of the spiritual body wherewith the saints shall be clothed, to qualify them for the presence of the King of kings, and to be in his house for ever? But O the miserable condition of the wicked in that day! Death now breaks their bodies and souls into an irreconcileable enmity, and how sad will their conjunction be! The soul will accuse the body to have been sin's solicitor, continually tempting to sensualities: and the body will upbraid more than ever it allured the soul, for its wicked compliance: then the sinner shall be an entire sacrifice burning, but never consumed. Mark 9. Now from the assurance of a blessed resurrection by Christ, the forementioned fear of death is conquered in believers. If the doctrine of the * transmigration of souls into bodies (the invention of Pythagoras) inspired his disciples with that fiery vigour, as to encounter the most present and apparent dangers, being fearless to part with the life that should be restored; how much more should a christian with a holy confidence receive death, knowing that

* Fœlices errore suo quos ille timorum
Maximus, haud urget leti metus, inde ruendi
In ferrum mens prona viris, animæq; capaces
Mortis, & ignavum redituræ parcere vitæ.

Lucan.

the life of his body shall not be finally lost, but renewed in a blessed eternity?

CHAP. V.

The qualifications of persons considered, that have a right to this privilege. Union with Christ the fountain of eternal life is absolutely requisite. The vital bond of that union is the sanctifying Spirit, The eminent operations of the Spirit considered, as the Spirit of truth, and of holiness, and the Comforter. He illuminates the understanding to see the reality and excellency of supernatural things. He inspires the ardent love of God. Divine love is the principle of universal holiness. The Spirit communicates a divine power to do the will of God.

IV. THE fourth general head to be considered, is, the *persons* that have an interest in this blessed privilege.

This inquiry is of infinite moment, both for the awakening of the secure, who vainly presume upon their interest in the salvation of the gospel, and for the confirming and encouraging the saints. And we have an infallible rule of trial declared by St. John: "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." 1 John 5. 12. All the excellent and comfortable benefits procured by our Saviour are communicated only to those who are united to him. Particularly with respect to the present subject: justification, that great blessing of the gospel, the complete pardon of sins, that disarms death of its sting, is not common to all that are christians in title, but is a privilege with a limitation; "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 8. 1. vitally as their head, from whom are derived spiritual influences, and judicially as their advocate in judgment; and such are described by this infallible character, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." The blessedness after death that is assured by a voice from hea-

ven, is with this precise restriction exclusive of all others, "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works follow them." Rev. 14. 13. The glorious resurrection at the last day, when the bodies of the saints that now rest in hope, shall be incorruptible and immortal, is the consequence of union with him. Thus the apostle declares; "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15. 22. As all that were naturally in and from Adam, the corrupt fountain of mankind, are under the sentence of death; so all that are in Christ, the head of the regenerate, shall partake of his blessed life. Others shall be raised by his power, as their Judge, but not as their head: raised to be more miserable than death can make them, not be transformed into his glorious resemblance; made capable of suffering an ever-dying death, not revived to eternal life.

Now the bond of our union to Christ, is the Holy Spirit derived from him, as the head of the church, and is the inward powerful and lasting principle of holiness, and new obedience in believers. "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit:" 1 Cor. 6. 17. that is, by the Spirit of holiness has a real participation of his life, is both "quickened and united to him." John 6. 36. When the prophet Elisha by the outward applying the parts of his body to the dead child, 2 King 4. 34. inspired life into him, there was no real union between them: but Christ is by his Spirit so intimately united to believers, "that he lives in them" and "they in him," Gal. 2. 20. The sanctifying Spirit renews the directing and commanding faculties, the fountains of moral actions; enlightens the understanding with saving knowledge, rectifies the obliquity of the will, purifies the affections, and reforms the life; so that "the same mind" is in christians "as was in Christ; and as his conversation was," such "is theirs in the world." This divine change is not wrought by natural reason, though assisted by the most powerful arguments. The breath of a man may as easily dispel a mist, or thaw a frost, as human directions and motives to virtue can renew the mind and heart, and produce a holy frame of soul towards God. Renewed christians are said to "be in the Spirit," illuminated, inclined and enabled by the Spirit to do God's will; and the Spirit of God to dwell in them, by his peculiar and eminent operations. "They live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit." An angel

may assume a body, and act by it: but the human soul enlivens it, and performs sensible operations by it. And such a principle is the Holy Spirit to the soul, gives it spiritual life, activity and power for good works. By what application of the Spirit's power this is produced is mysterious and inexplicable: but as the apostle speaks of his rapture into the third heavens, that he knew it was real, and heard "unutterable things;" though how it was performed, "whether in the body, or out of the body," he could not tell: thus when a natural man, the current of whose thoughts and affections was to the things of this world, becomes spiritual, when the carnal appetite is subdued, and sanctified reason has the throne, when he feels such strong and sweet impulsives to holiness as engage the will; when the stream of his desires ascend to the things above, and his life becomes holy and heavenly, he feels and knows this wonderful change, though the manner how it was wrought he cannot tell. I will show more fully this sanctifying work of the Spirit, that we may the better understand our state.

The Spirit of God is denominated by various titles, "the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness, the Comforter," John 15. 26. and represented by various types, by "an ointment that clarifies the eye to see things aright," by "cleansing refreshing water," by "purifying refining fire," Rom. 1. 4. correspondent to his sacred operations in the soul.

As the Spirit of truth, he illuminates the understanding to see the reason and excellency of supernatural and heavenly things, of the great mysteries of godliness, of eternal glory; so that a christian in his most deliberate, solemn and composed thoughts, in his exactest valuation infinitely prefers them before the gaudy vanities of this transient world. When the eyes of the mind are truly enlightened, present things appear, or rather disappear, as shadows.

As the Spirit of holiness, he renews the will and affections, inspires the soul with divine and unutterable desires after the favour and grace of God, and communicates spiritual power for the prosecuting and obtaining those desires.

The Holy Spirit raises such a love to God, that habitually and strongly inclines the soul to obey his commands.

This is the most clear and essential character of a christian, the special and most excellent property of a saint, upon which

all other holy qualifications depend. As reason is the first and chief excellence of man, from whence his other perfections are derived, that distinguish him from the brutes, and give him a natural and regular pre-eminence and dominion over them, so that a man is most properly defined a reasonable creature: thus the love of God is the most divine grace, the true form of holiness, the root from whence all other virtues spring and flourish, and most peculiarly distinguish a saint from unregenerate men, however adorned and accomplished; so that a saint is most properly defined to be a lover of God.

This is the principle of true holiness inherent in the soul, and shining in the conversation, that distinguishes the sincerity of a saint from the art of hypocrisy, an affected appearance of religion for carnal sordid respects; and from civil virtue, that restrains from what is ignominious and disgraceful to our reputation, and makes obnoxious to penalties of the laws, and excites to praiseworthy actions, upon worldly motives; and from philosophical morality, that forbids vice as contrary to reason, and commends virtue as the chief ornament and perfection of human nature, without a regard to please and glorify God.

And divine love is the principle of universal holiness. Love is called "the fulfilling of the law," as it is a comprehensive grace, and as it draws forth all the active powers of the soul to do God's will in an exact manner. Universal obedience is the exercise of love in various instances. As the spouse in the Song of Solomon is transformed in divers representations; sometimes as a sister, sometimes as a warrior, sometimes as the keeper of a vineyard, but she always acted as a lover, and her chief business was to please her beloved. This allegorical description of the church, signifies that when the soul is inflamed with the love of God, that affection will be active, and discover itself in all it does or suffers in the service of God. This will make a christian very desirous and diligent to please God in all things, and careful not to displease him in any thing; for that is the inseparable effect of love. The felicity of the natural temper, and the force of education, may cause a loathing of some evils, and dispose to some good works, but with a reserved delight in other sins, and a secret exception against other duties. Servile fear is a partial principle, and causes an unequal respect to the divine precepts: it restrains from sins of greater guilt, at which

conscience takes fire: it urges to some duties, the neglect of which causes disquiet; but the love of God causes the hatred of sin; and therefore it is against all sin, not only to prevent the exercise of it, but to eradicate it out of the soul. All the fearful consequences of sin do not render it so odious to a gracious spirit, as its own proper idea and intrinsic evil, as it is contrary to the holy nature and law of God. Love unites the soul to God, and turns the thoughts continually to him: and the lively sense of his majesty and presence, who is so pure that he cannot behold iniquity, causes an aversion from all that is displeasing to his divine eyes. And from hence it is that a zealous lover of God is frequent and strict in reviewing his heart and ways; and upon the discovery of sinful failings, renews his repentance, which is the exercise of grief and love, and renews his purposes of more care and circumspection for the future. Love aspires to be like God in all possible degrees of purity; for it inflames our desires after his favour, as that which is better than life, and all the sweetest enjoyments of it: and holiness is the powerful attractive of God's delightful love to us.

Love is the principle of free, ingenuous, and joyful obedience. It was our Saviour's meat and drink to do the will of his Father. For love is the fountain of pleasure, it moves the soul with election and liberty, and makes every thing grateful that proceeds from it. Therefore the apostle declares, "that the law is not made for a righteous man;" that is, as it is enforced by terrible penalties, to constrain rebellious sinners to obedience; for love is an internal living law in the heart, and has an imperial power over his actions. And this also distinguishes the renovation of one sanctified by the Spirit from the imperfect change that is made in the unregenerate. They may stop the eruption of corrupt nature, but "are swine, that being washed, have an inclination to wallow in the mire:" they may by strong impressions of fear be urged to do many good things; but in this they are like a bowl that is thrown with such violence, as controls the drawing of the bias, and makes it run contrary to it. But love inclines the soul to obey the holy motions of the Spirit with facility: as the wheels in Ezekiel's vision "turned every way with readiness as the Spirit moved them."

And with holy love there is a spiritual power communicated, that both the natural averseness and impotence to what is good

may be healed. By the virtue of the sanctifying Spirit, the soul that was dead, absolutely unable to perform spiritual and supernatural acts, "is revived to a kind of omnipotence, it can do all things," required by the evangelical covenant, by the new law that is in the hands of our merciful Mediator for salvation. It is true, there are relics of sin in the best, and the flesh and spirit are repugnant principles warring against one another: but the renewed spirit will make no capitulation or composition with sin, but is so predominant, that sin is gradually subdued, and does not so freely and frequently break forth as it does from the unrenewed. By the grace of the Spirit "we are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof;" and to perform holy duties with freedom, alacrity and zeal, in such a manner as is acceptable to God. In short, saving grace is distinguished from that which is common to the unregenerate by its prevalency and constancy. There may be a declination in the saints tending to a downfal; but "the seed of God," that supernatural grace that "remains in them," will by the power of the Holy Spirit recover the supremacy. Others may be enlightened, and feel some good motions, and transient touches; as Saul had his rapture among the prophets: but they are not truly, entirely, and perseveringly converted to God; they are not proof against the allurements or terrors of the world. They make a fair profession till they are tried by temptations. Congealed drops of water appear like solid crystal, till the warm beams of the sun dissolve them, and discover the hypocrisy of the crystal. False jewels may seem to have the lustre of diamonds, till they are broke by a fall, and discovered to be glass. Thus the riches, the honours and pleasures of the flesh melt some, and temporal evils break the resolution of others, and make it evident they were not sincere converts. But where the Holy Spirit savingly works, he is said "to dwell:" he is not like a passenger, or a tenant at will, that neglects the house, and suffers it to fall into ruin, but as the proprietary and owner he keeps perpetual residence in true christians, and by his continual influence preserves them from final apostacy.

Now from hence we may judge whether we have an interest in Christ and his benefits. For the apostle clearly tells us, "that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Rom. 8. 9. By this sacred signature we are appropriated to Christ, and visibly distinguished from the world. For though the secret and pure influences of the Spirit in the soul are only known to the person that feels them, yet his active inspirations are declarative of his presence and power in the outward conversation. As the wind that is of so thin and subtile a nature that it is invisible in itself, but we certainly know from what point it blows by the course and way that the ship makes: thus the Spirit of God, who is compared to the wind, is discovered by an infallible indication, his fruits and effects in a holy life. And those who have communion with Christ by his Spirit, have a share in his victories, and may with confidence meet the last enemy, death: for we are assured, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, by the Spirit that dwelleth in us." Rom. 8. 11.

A preparative conformity to Christ in grace, will be followed with a consummate in glory. But those who never felt the sanctifying efficacy of the Spirit in their hearts and lives, though they are christians in profession, yet they have no other union with Christ, than a dead branch with a tree that receives no sap and virtue from it; or an artificial member joined to the body, that may have the outward clothing and ornaments proper to that part, but derives no life and sense from it. "Whoever is in Christ is a new creature." 2 Cor. 5. 17. And only "those who partake in the first resurrection from sin, shall be exempted from the power of the second death," and upon just grounds are freed from the terrors of the first.

CHAP. VI.

Our dear obligations to our Redeemer considered, who frees us from the sting, and fear, and dominion of death. His love was equal to the height of his glory from whence he descended, and the depth of his sufferings for our sake. An excitation to make it the great design of our lives to overcome the fear of death. Reconciliation with God requisite to our being freed from the powers of death. Repentance is necessary to obtain the favour of God. The infinite danger of delaying it, unfolded. The presumption of long life is vain. The hope of a future repentance is very deceitful. It is very hazardous whether God will accept the repentance that flows merely from bitter constraint at last. The continuance in sin upon the presumption of pardon, renders men most unworthy of it.

TO apply this point, let us,

1. Consider our dear obligations to our blessed Saviour, who to free us from the sting and enslaving fear of death, submitted to it with all its terrors from God and wicked men. He felt a sadness to an agony in his soul, and suffered the equal extremities of ignominy and torment in his body. The favour of God was intercepted from him, that it may shine upon us in that gloomy hour. And all his terrible sufferings, though foreknown by his enlightened mind, could not weaken his determined will to undergo them for us: but when Peter regarded with a more tender eye his life than our salvation, he was repelled with indignation. Unparalleled love! no less than divine, transcending all the instances of human affection. The highest kind and excess of love among men is to die for another, and the highest degree in that kind is to die to save an enemy; and of this our Saviour is the singular example: love incomprehensible! "it passes knowledge, and all understanding" but his who expressed it. His love was equal to the height of his glory from whence he descended, and the depth of his sufferings that he sustained in our stead. "By washing us from our sins in his blood, he makes us kings," Rev. 1. dignifies us with spiritual sovereignty over, not only defiling, but disturbing passions. The freest and most confident sinner in the world, that rebels against the divine

laws without restraint, is a slave, not only under the chains of his imperious lusts, but in that he is liable to the scourgings of conscience whenever awakened, and to the servile fear of death every day. But the sincere christian has a clear and sweet peace, a blessed tranquillity from the tormenting apprehensions and fears of death, that are the just consequences of guilt.

One of the ancient Romans * highly celebrates the astronomers, who discovered the true causes of the eclipses of the sun and moon, and freed the world from the double darkness of ignorance and fear; for, before that discovery, men believed the obscuring of those great lights were the fainting fits of nature, and mortal symptoms threatening an universal calamity. But what praise and blessing is due to our Saviour, who hath given us infallible assurance that the death of the righteous is not, as the heathen world imagined, an irreparable loss of life, but a short eclipsing of this low and mean light that is common to sensitive creatures, to be restored more excellent and permanent in heaven, where those stars shine in the divine presence for ever. "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." This should render him "infinitely precious to us," and inflame our hearts with desires equal to our obligations to serve him.

2. Let us make it the great design and main business of our lives to remove from our souls the just fears of death. It is one of the solemn follies of the world to fear where there is no cause: as if a sentinel should mistake glow-worms in the night for lighted matches, and give a false alarm: but it is a worse folly, though pleasing, not to fear when there is the greatest reason to excite it. And it is so in the present case; for the most are without the fear of death, that should make them serious in preparing for it: nay, to maintain their security, are as unwilling to hear conscience declare the wretchedness of their condition with respect to eternity, as Ahab was the prophet Micaiah, "who always foretold evil things to him."

It was the chief design of the philosophers, by principles of reason, to fortify themselves against all frightful accidents, and with a masculine mind, with an ardent and generous spirit, to

* Macti ingenio esse cœli interpretes, rerumque naturæ capaces, argumenti repertores, quo Deos hominesque vinxistis. *Plin. lib.* 2.

* encounter this inevitable evil. When one of them was threatened by the Emperor Antigonus with present death, he boldly replied, threaten this to your dissolute courtiers that are softened and melted by sensual pleasures, and easily receptive of terrible impressions, not to a philosopher to whom death is contemptible in any appearance. This was a piece of affected bravery; for Pagan philosophy could never furnish them with armour of proof against the dart of our last enemy. But the gospel assuring us that death is an entrance into immortality, makes that to be the reality of a christian, that was a vain boast of the philosophers.

Now that we may be established in that blessed tranquillity that death cannot discompose, the following directions are infinitely useful.

i. We must give all diligence to be in a state of reconciliation with God. The things requisite to that are, as the apostle declares, "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20. 21. Repentance includes a godly sorrow for sins past, with a detestation and forsaking them sincerely, without hypocrisy; and entirely, without partiality in the heart and conversation. It is called "repentance from dead works," Heb. 6. 1. the proper name of our sins, that deserve eternal death. By repentance we return to obedience that is due to God our maker and lawgiver. Faith respects the Redeemer, who by his blood shed on the cross, and pleaded in heaven, reconciles God to penitent sinners. The belief of his merciful and powerful mediation for our acceptance and pardon, "works by love," 2 Cor. 5. 14. and "constrains us" to dedicate ourselves in a devoted propriety to his glory and service, and to live according to that dedication. These two are absolutely necessary to the vital and salvifical state of a christian. And as soon as a person sincerely repents and believes, he is justified before God; and if he dies, will certainly obtain eternal glory. This should be the early and most speedy work of our lives: for the delay of repentance, and neglect of securing the favour of God, arms death with more stings and terrors.

* Fœlix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas:
Atque metus mortis & inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus.

Virgil.

The infinite danger of this I will unfold, to awaken the careless and secure.

The devil is a sophister in perfection; and his ordinary and successful artifice to elude the force of present conviction, and wrap men in sin and damnation, is to induce them to delay the great work of the soul till afterward. He is not so foolish to tell them, as he did our first parents, "ye shall not die;" for the temptation is so palpable, that it could deceive none. Though the evidence and certainty of supernatural truths, that disturb the security of sinners, is sometimes obscured by affected doubts; yet there is no artifice that can resist the full and strong conviction in men, that death is inevitable. Though nature recoils from it with abhorrence, yet this sad truth is so visible, that it forces an assent from all. Those who are titular gods, the greatest princes, are not so vain as to pretend to an exemption by privilege from that fatal necessity; they cannot fancy to be embalmed alive, and that nature may be made incorruptible by art. The palace is as near the grave as the cottage: therefore the devil cherishes in men fond hopes of a long life. As some optic glasses deceive the sight, and make a superficial representation in colours on a wall but two or three steps distant, appear a long deep gallery: thus the tempter by a dangerous deceit, presents to the imagination the fatal term at a great distance; and since he cannot lessen the certainty of death in men's belief, he removes the image of it out of their memories, to weaken the impression that it is capable to make on their affections. They dare not venture to die, as they live, careless of salvation, and unprepared for their accounts with God; therefore they suspend the workings of conscience by a seeming compliance; they resolve at random to convert and reform hereafter, but will not determine at present to forsake their sins. The tempter insinuates there will be a long interval between the present time and the last hour, that shall decide their state for ever; that it will be a convenient season to prepare for the other world when they have done with this; as if repentance were best at last, when there are no temptations, and therefore no danger of retracting it. And the heart of man is a great flatterer, very subtile to deceive and ruin him with vain resolutions of a devout retirement, and becoming seriously religious hereafter: and thus by an easy permission he gratifies the present

desires of the flesh, and goes in a circuit from one vanity to another, till death surprise the presumer. It is very applicable to this purpose, what is related of Alcœus the poet, who from every season of the year, * took arguments to give a new title to his intemperance: the spring, he said, required liberal drinking, in sign of joy for the renovation of nature; the summer to temper our heat, and refresh our thirst; it was due to autumn that is dedicated to the vintage; and winter required it to expel the cold, that would congeal the blood and spirits: thus he pleaded for the allowance of his excess. And so men in the several ages of life (that are correspondent to the seasons of the year) frame some excuses to delay repentance, and give some colour to their rebellion against God, who commands us to hear his voice today, obediently and immediately, upon no less than being excluded from his blessed rest for ever: Heb. 2. 7, 8. yet the self-deceiving sinner preaches another gospel to himself, † and thinks the vanities of childhood, the pleasures of youth, the business of middle age, and the infirmity of old age, are plausible pretences to put off the serious work of repentance: O that such would duly consider the desperate uncertainty upon which men build their hopes of a future repentance, and divine acceptance!

1. Men delay repentance upon the presumption of a long life: but what is more uncertain? It is the wisdom and goodness of God to conceal in his impenetrable counsels the time of our sojourning here: for if men, though liable to death every hour, and therefore should be under just fear lest it surprise them unprepared, yet against so strong a curb, run with that exorbitant vehemence after the present world; how much more licentious would they be, if secured from sudden death? but none can promise to himself one day. Death comes not according to the order of nature, but the decree of God. How many in the flower of their youth and strength thought themselves at as great a distance from death, as the east is from the west, when there was not the space of an hour between them and death, between them and hell? The lamp suddenly expires by a blast of wind, when there is plenty of oil to feed it. The rich man pleased himself

* Athen.

† Quis enim satis explicet verbis, quantum malì sit non obedire tanto potestatis imperio, & tanto tenenti supplicio?

with designs of sensual enjoyments for many years, yet did not see the dawning of the next morning: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." This sentence is pronounced in heaven against thousands that are now alive, conversant in the vanities and business of the world, eating and drinking, playing and trading, and all unconcerned as to dying, yet shall breathe their last before to-morrow, and their unwilling souls be rent from the embraces of their bodies. In various manners men die from inward and outward causes; an apoplexy, an imposthume, a flux of rhume stopping respiration, kills the body without any presaging signs of death: as if the roof and all the chambers should fall within the house, while the walls are standing entire. And how many unforeseen accidents, and therefore inevitable, put a sudden period to life? Is it not our truest wisdom, by an early repentance, to prepare for death, when the season is certainly short, and but uncertainly continued, and the omission is irreparable?

2. Suppose life be continued, yet sinners that delay repentance, can have no rational hopes that they shall sincerely repent in time to come. For,

(1.) Saving repentance is the gift of God: and is it likely that those who have been insensible of the loud and earnest calls of the word, inflexible to the gracious methods of his providence leading them to repentance, should at last obtain converting grace? The gales of the Spirit are very transient, and blow where he pleases; and can it be expected that those who have wilfully and often resisted him, should by an exuberant favour receive afterwards more powerful grace, to overrule their stubborn wills, and make them obedient? To expect divine grace and the powerful workings of the Spirit, after long resisting his holy excitations, is both unreasonable and unrevealed. It is written as with a sun-beam, that God will graciously pardon repenting sinners that reform their lives;* but it is no where promised that he will give saving repentance to those who securely continue in sin, upon a corrupt confidence they will repent at last. Our Saviour threatens to him that neglects the improving the grace that is offered, "That which he hath shall be taken away:" yet men unwilling at present to forsake their sins of

* Nemo ergo sibi promittat, quod evangelium non promittit. *Aug.*

pleasure and profit, vainly hope they shall obtain grace hereafter, without any promise from God, and against the tenor of his threatenings. God has threatened that his Spirit "shall not always strive with rebellious sinners," and then their state is remediless. This may be the case of many in this life, who are insensible of their misery. As consumptive persons decline by degrees, lose their appetite, colour and strength, till at last they are hopeless: so the withdrawings of the Spirit are gradual, his motions are not so strong nor frequent; and upon the continued provocations of the disobedient, finally leaves them under that most fearful doom, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still:" and thus punishes them on this side hell, as he does the damned, by giving them over to sin. It is a bloody adventure for men to indulge their carnal appetites, as if they had infallible assurance that they should not die in an impenitent state. The delayer does not regularly trust, but tempt God.

(2.) Suppose the Holy Spirit be not totally withdrawn, yet by every day's continuance in sin, the heart is more hardened against the impressions of grace, more averse from returning to God, and repentance more difficult and hazardous. The last guilty disposition that seals up the damnation of sinners is impenitence. Now he that delays the returning to his duty, shall have more cause to repent hereafter, but less will and power; for sin repeated, makes him more incapable of repentance, and that which is indisposition, will become averseness and obstinacy. The heart with difficulty changes its last end. Actions may be suddenly changed, when there is a disability to perform them; but the inward inclinations to sin, without supernatural renewing grace, remain. It is therefore the subtilty of the old serpent to make the entrance of sin easy: for he knows that custom is a second nature, and has a mighty power in us: "Can an Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard change his spots? then may you who are accustomed to do evil, do good." If sin in its infancy can make such resistance, that the Spirit of grace is foiled in his motions to rescue the soul from its bondage, how much more when it is grown into a confirmed habit? Therefore the apostle urges so zealously; "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

(3.) How uncertain it is whether God will accept the addresses of such at last? We are commanded, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." The limitation implies, if the season be neglected, he will hide his face for ever. Now in cases of great moment and hazard, what diligence, what caution should be used?

1st. Consider how derogatory it is to his majesty, to offer to him the dregs of our age, the reliques of a licentious careless life, spent in the works of vanity. Is this "to give glory to God?" Jer. 13. 16. Contempt provokes superiors as much as actual injuries: how vilifying is it of his eternal greatness, that men lavishly waste the best of their time and strength upon their lusts; and when through weakness of age, or the violence of a disease, they can no more do the acts of sin, nor relish the pleasures of sin, to presume that God will upon their prayers forgive their sins so long indulged, and of such violent provocations, and receive them into his kingdom, as if he could not be happy without them, and it were his interest to receive them? God has laid his exceptions against such addresses: he may justly stand upon his greatness and honour: "If ye offer the blind for a sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor, will he be pleased with it, to accept thy person, saith the Lord of hosts?" As the Lord upbraids the Jews for their black ingratitude in bargaining for thirty pieces of silver, to have him betrayed to their malice; "a goodly price that I was prized at of them:" so when there is an universal prostration of all the powers and faculties, when the spirits are damped, the vital heat is checked, and the function of the senses is obstructed, then to seek to God for mercy, and to make fair promises of obedience, he may justly reproach the presumer, "a goodly time you have allotted for me!" Your youth and strength, the golden age of life, have been wasted on your lusts, and in the business of the world; and the wretched remains you think worthy of my acceptance.

2dly. Consider what sincerity or moral value is in religion that merely proceeds from bitter constraint. It is a rule in law, *Falsum est eum peperisse, cui mortuæ filius extractus est:* it is not a natural birth when the child is extracted from the dead mother: it is not genuine piety that is extorted by the rack, whilst the heart full of reluctancy does not truly consent. Pure reli-

gion flows uncompelled from love to God; it is the dregs that come forth with pressing. It is observed of the Israelites, that "when God slew them, they sought him, and returned and inquired early after God." But it is added, "Nevertheless they did flatter with their mouths, and they lied to them with their tongues: for their hearts were not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Psal. 78. 34, 36. How often does experience convince us of the inefficacy of a sickbed repentance? How many that were very devout and mournful with one foot as it were in the grave, and another in hell, and were as a brand plucked out of the fire; yet when the fear of death is removed, all the terrors of conscience, the religious affections that were felt and expressed by them, vanish as the morning dew? Now converting grace is distinguished by its radication and efficacy, not only from the mere pretenses of those who know their own insincerity, but from the real workings of conscience, and the imperfect dispositions to good that are in the unrenewed. And those persons who with the return of health, have returned to their sins, if they had died with their religious resolutions, would have presumed "that their repentance was unto life," and of their interest in the divine mercy. "The heart is deceitful above all things," and above all things deceitful to itself. Besides, when sinners are plunged in deep distress, when the shadow of death sits upon their eye-lids, they may with plentiful effusions of tears desire God to receive them to heaven, not to see and praise his adorable excellencies, not to please and glorify him for ever, but as a sanctuary from revenging justice, a refuge from hell. And will such prayers prevail? What swells the confidence of sinners, but unworthy notions of God, as if a forced and formal confession of their sins could deceive his all-discerning eye; and desires merely terminated on themselves were sufficient to reconcile his offended majesty?

3. There is nothing renders men more unworthy of mercy than continuance in sin, upon presumption of an easy pardon at last. This is the most provoking abuse of his "Goodness and long-suffering, that should lead them to repentance." Rom. 2. He can in the twinkling of an eye, in the beating of a pulse, cut off the sinner: it is as easy to his power as to will it. And there is no consideration should be so melting and moving as his clemency. We read of David, that he had more than once in his

power Saul his unjust and cruel enemy, yet spared him: the effect of it was that Saul was softened, and under such compunction of spirit, that he wept, confessed his guilt, and persecuted him no more, overcome by that unexampled love: "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go?" 1 Sam. 26. 21. Yet men take advantage from the goodness of God, securely to despise his laws. The habitual sinner thinks that God is so gracious, such a lover of souls, so easy to be entreated, that upon his dying prayer, "Lord, remember me in thy kingdom," the answer will be, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This is the deceitful principle upon which men usually build their hopes, as actions that bear the image of their minds clearly manifest. Now this presumptuous indulgence gives the deepest grain to their sins, and makes them more incapable of pardon. Chrysostom observes, that Judas was encouraged to betray his master, presuming on his lenity, goodness, benignity; which considerations intolerably aggravated his treason, and confounded his hopes. There is a dreadful threatening against those who reject the invitations of grace in their prosperity, and when the righteous judge comes to sentence and execution, are earnest supplicants for mercy. "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes: when your fear comes as a desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me: for they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Prov. 1. A doleful case beyond all possible expression! when the sinful creature, forsaken of all comforts below, addresses to heaven for relief, and meets with derision and fury, scorn and indignation. The foolish virgins, careless to prepare for the Bridegroom's coming, in vain at last discovered their want of oil, in vain solicited the wise virgins for supply, in vain knocked at the door, crying, "Lord, Lord, open to us," Mat. 25. The answer was severe and peremptory, "I know you not;" and they were for ever excluded from the joys of heaven.

CHAP. VII.

It is most incongruous to delay our reconciliation with God till the time of sickness. It is very uncomfortable to delay it till our declining time. The vanity of men's presuming to delay repentance, because some have been converted in their last hours. The instances of such are rare, and not to be drawn into example. Innumerable have died in their sins, deceived with hopes of repenting hereafter. Those who have delayed their repentance, are not utterly destitute of hopes if they earnestly seek God at last.

4. HOW incongruous is it to delay the solemn work of reconciliation with God till the time of sickness. This is an affair wherein our transcendent interest is concerned, and should be performed in our most calm and sensible condition, when we are most capable of reflecting upon our ways, and making an exact trial of ourselves in order to our returning to God by a holy change of our lives. Now that the time of sickness is not a convenient season for this work, is sadly evident; for some diseases are stupifying, and all the powers of the soul are benumbed in a dull captivity; so that the sick man only perceives with his animal faculties. Some diseases are tormenting, and cause a great disorder in the soul, and distract the thoughts from considering its spiritual state. When the storm is at the highest, and the pilot so sick that he can give no directions, the ship is left to the fury of the winds, and escapes by miracle. When there is a tempest in the humours of the body, and the soul by sympathy is so discomposed that it cannot apply itself to prepare for its appearance before the divine tribunal, what danger of being lost, and passing from a short agony to everlasting torment?

Besides; suppose the sickness more tolerable, yet how unfit is a person weak and languishing, * when sense and conscience are both afflicted, to encounter with the cruel enemy of souls? All that sincerely seek peace with God, must expect fierce anger and war from satan: therefore it is a point of necessary wisdom,

* Male cum his agitur, quibus necessitas incumbit belli & morbi. *Veg.*

whilst our bodies and minds are in the best order, to be preparing against his assaults.

5. Consider how uncomfortable it is to delay repentance till age and sickness, when the fruits of it are not so evident nor acceptable: in evil days, and the approaches of death, it is very hard to discover the sincerity of the heart, whether repentance proceeds from holy principles; whether the sorrow then expressed be godly for sin, or merely natural, for punishment; whether the good resolutions be the effects of permanent fidelity, or of violent fear, that will vanish, the cause being removed. When the invitations to sin cease, there may remain a secret undiscerned love to it in the heart, which is the centre of corruption, and root of apostacy. The snake that seemed dead in the frost, revived by the fire. The inordinate affections that seemed mortified, when the sensitive faculties were disabled to carnal enjoyments, may have inward life, and will soon be active and vigorous in the presence of temptations. And that a deathbed-repentance is usually deceitful, appears from hence, that not one of a thousand that recover from dangerous diseases are faithful in performing their most sacred and solemn vows. How many having the sentence of death in themselves, and under the terrors of the Lord, have expressed the greatest detestation of their sins, and resolved, as they thought sincerely, if God would spare them, to reform their ways, to become new creatures, exemplary in all holy conversation; yet the danger being over, their heats of devotion expire as they revive, and their lusts recover strength with their bodies, and being suppressed only by fear, are more fierce in their return. Their hearts were as marble, that in rainy weather seems dissolved into water, but it is only from the moisture of the air, and remains as hard as ever: when the fear of death is removed, all their promises of reformation are ineffective, as violent and void; all their religious affections vanish as the morning-dew. Now if these persons had died before this visible trial and discovery, they had passed into the other world with the reputation of true penitents, deceiving others with their prayers and tears, and liberal promises, the outward signs of repentance, and deceived themselves by the inward workings of an alarmed conscience: therefore ministers should be very circumspect in applying the promises of mercy to persons in such a state; for an error in that kind has fearful consequences. A lit-

tle opiate divinity may quiet the mind for a time, but the virtue of it will be soon spent, and the presumer perishes for ever. But suppose a dying person with true tears and unfeigned persevering affections returns to God; can he have a comfortable assurance of his sincerity? Indeed the searcher and judge of hearts will accept him: but how doubtful and wavering are his hopes? what anxious fears are in his breast, lest he builds upon a sandy foundation? And how dreadful is it to appear before the tribunal of God, and expect an uncertain sentence?

But sinners still please themselves in this, that God has effectually called some at the last hour, and they may find the same favour with others. To this I answer:

(1.) It is true we have some rare admirable instances of God's mercy and grace, the dying thief and some others, which showed it is possible with God to abolish the most confirmed habits in a short time, and by a swift conversion to prepare a sinner for heaven. But these miraculous examples are not to be drawn into consequence for the encouragement of any in their sins. A * prince will not endure that his free favours should be made a law to him, and the special privilege of some be extended to all. As Thales said, an old mariner that has escaped the various dangers by rocks and storms at sea, was a new miracle: so that one who has lived an obstinate sinner, dies a penitent believer, is very rare and extraordinary. What our Saviour said concerning the salvation of rich men, is justly applicable to this case, "That it was as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." This so astonished the apostles, that they cried, "Who then can be saved?" To mitigate the difficulty, he reminds them of the divine omnipotence: "All things are possible with God." Thus for one who has been hardened in a long course of sin, and making himself meet for the company of damned spirits in hell, to be at last suddenly prepared and received into the pure and glorious society above, is possible, but possible only as miracles are, by the efficacy of infinite power; and we cannot reasonably expect such miracles. And are heaven and hell such trivial things as to be left to an uncertainty? Are not men concerned in another manner in the affairs of this world? How careful to prevent the

* Quod alicui gratiose conceditur, trahi non debet ab aliis in exemplum.

sentence of death, of imprisonment, of banishment? How diligent to obtain some temporal advantage? Yet how neglectful in things of highest importance? It may be, says the secure wretch, God will give me repentance at last, as he did to others. * Remember you speak of that that most nearly concerns your soul, and dare you venture the salvation of an immortal soul upon a naked possibility of receiving grace? What reasonable person would neglect a disease that may prove deadly, and rely on extreme remedies? And can you be guilty of such a cruel indifference, such a desperate carelessness, as to leave eternal salvation and damnation to a peradventure?

(2.) Consider how many thousands have died in their sins, † and of them great numbers cherished fallacious hopes of repenting at last. Diagoras the atheist, that denied a governing providence of things in this lower world, the sphere of mutability, when one for his conviction showed him in the ‡ temple of Neptune many votive tables, containing the grateful acknowledgments of those who by addresses to the gods in dangerous storms, had arrived safe at their ports; and asked him, whether he had observed those numerous testimonies for divine providence? § He replied, 'I see them; but how many having invocated Neptune, yet perished in the ocean, and never came to pay their vows for deliverance?' It was impiety in him to argue so against God's disposing providence; but it may be justly said to those who neglect their present duty, presuming upon some examples of his glorious goodness on those who were converted and saved in their approaches to death, how many have finally miscarried in shooting that gulph, to one that has arrived safe at heaven? How many that presume upon their youth and strength to delay repentance, are suddenly cut off? the first symptom of their sickness is death. And what the angel with such solemnity declared, "that time should be no more," is verified concerning them by an unexpected dissolution. How many, when sick, hope either by the vigour of nature, or the virtue of medicines, to overcome the disease? and thus hope is cherished by the mor-

* Τί λέγεις ἴσως ἐννόησον ὅτι περὶ Ψυχῆς βυλεύν. *Chrys.*

† Vix dici potest quantos, hæc inanis spei umbra deceperit. *Aug.*

‡ Tully. § Tully.

tal kindness, the cruel deceit of friends, who are unwilling to discover their danger, lest their spirits should sink under the apprehension of it. And thus deluded, many never see death till they feel it, and perish for ever in their impenitence. How many that are guilty and graceless, when distant from death and hell but a few hours; yet from atheism are secure as Jonah, who slept in the midst of a tempest at sea? The tenor of their lives discovers this to be divine vengeance, they are seized by a spirit of slumber, and pass without fear into the state of everlasting desperation. How many are deceived with the appearance of repentance, and mistake a false peace for a true, and assuage the anguish of conscience, by palliating remedies? Their sorrow for sin, their prayers, their resolutions of reformation, are the product of servile fear, that is ineffectual to salvation: and as it is with crafty tradesmen, that take up much upon trust when near breaking; so they are very liberal of the promises of amendment when they are near dying. From hence they vainly presume that God is reconciled to them, whose all-discerning eye sees the inward spring of their sorrows, and the principle of all the religious resolutions is the guilty fear of eternal judgment. Now a false tranquillity is more terrible than the storms of a troubled spirit: for those who hope upon deceitful grounds, are in the most hopeless state, neglecting what is requisite in order to salvation. Thus innumerable pass in a cloud of delusion to the kingdom of darkness. And how many who have lived in careless security, as if they had "made a covenant with death," when conscience is awakened, and looks into the depth of their guilt, when they see death before them attended with judgment, and judgment with an everlasting hell, as we read of Sisera, who from extreme fear passed to extreme security; so on the contrary, these self-deceivers from security have fallen into despair. Then truth and conscience, that were so long under unrighteous restraints, break the fetters, and terribly charge the sinners: then innumerable acts, which they thought to be innocent, appear to be sins; and sin, that they made light of, to be infinitely evil, and in the highest degree hateful to God. And sometimes by the suggestions of the enemy of souls, they are overwhelmed with despair, and their last error is worse than the first. The devil makes his advantage of the timorous conscience, as well as of the seared: solitude is his scene, as well as the noisy theatre;

and by contrary ways, either presumption or despair, brings sinners to the same end. He changes his methods according to their dispositions; the tempter turns accuser, and then such who had but a dim sight of sin before, have an over-quick sight of it, and are swallowed up in an abyss of confusion: the condition of such is extremely miserable. It is observed by those who are bitten with a mad dog, that their cure is extremely * difficult, if not impossible; for being tormented with thirst, yet are so fearful of water, that the sight of it sometimes causes sudden convulsions and death. This is a significant emblem of a despairing soul: for when enraged conscience bites to the quick, the guilty person filled with estuations and terrors, ardently thirsts for pardon, yet fearfully forsakes his own mercies. Whatever is propounded to encourage faith in the divine promises, he turns to justify his infidelity. Represent to him the infinite mercies of God, the invaluable merits of Christ sufficient to redeem the lost world, it increases his despair, because he has perversely abused those mercies, and neglected those merits. The most precious promises of the gospel are killing terrors to him: as the sweet title of friend, wherewith our Saviour received Judas when he came to betray him, was the most stinging reproach of his perfidious villany. Thus it appears how dangerous it is to delay repentance and reconciliation with God till sickness and a deathbed, when the remembrance or forgetfulness of sin, the sense or security of conscience may be equally destructive.

The sum of what has been amplified in this part is this: a vain hope of living long, and being reconciled to God when men please, is the fatal foundation of their sins and misery. They apply the word of God against the mind of God, and securely provoke him, as if they could take heaven by violence, in contradiction to the gospel. But they usually dispose of that time they shall never enjoy, and presume upon that mercy and grace they shall never obtain. We are commanded "to seek the Lord while he may be found;" a sad intimation that it is not in our power to find him to our comfort when we please. He spares long, but abused patience will deliver sinners to revenging justice. Samson was three times in the chamber of his lust exposed to treachery,

* Miserrimum morbi genus, in quo æger & siti & aquæ metu cruciatur, quorum spes in angusto est. *Cels.*

and escaped; but the fourth time he said, "I will arise," but was surprised by his enemies, and lost his strength, and sight, and liberty. How justly will the wilful neglect of salvation so long, and so compassionately offered to sinners, render the divine mercy inexorable to their prayers and tears at last? When a Roman gentleman that was wont to revel in the night, and sleep in the day, had wasted a great estate by luxury, he petitioned the emperor Tiberius to relieve his poverty, and was dismissed with this upbraiding answer, *Sero experrectus es*, you are risen too late. He never opened his eyes to see his condition till it was past remedy. This is the sad case of many that waste the seasons of grace, and are careless of their duty, till upon the point of perishing, and then address themselves to God for his favour and pardon, but are justly rejected with the reproaches of their obstinate neglect of salvation in the time of their lives. I doubt not that some are wonderfully converted and saved at last; but these special mercies are like our Saviour's miraculous healing the two blind persons as he was passing in the way, when great numbers of the blind remained uncured. We read a prodigious story in the book of Kings, that a captain and his fifty men commanded Elias to come to the king, and immediately a tempest of lightning destroyed them. Now who would think that another captain with his fifty should be so desperate, having the ashes and relics of those miserable carcasses before their eyes, as to make the same citation to the prophet? yet they did, and provoked the justice of heaven to consume them. And this madness is exemplified in thousands every day; for notwithstanding they see sinners like themselves cut off in their evil ways, they continue unreformed, as if they were fearless of hell, as if resolved to secure their own damnation.

I would not from what has been represented in this matter so universally useful, discourage any that have lived in a course of sin, from earnest seeking to God in their last hours: for even then they are not utterly destitute of hope. The gospel sets forth the mercy of God to returning sinners, in various representations and expressions of admirable tenderness. When the lost sheep was recovered, there was joy as if a treasure had been found. The prodigal had wasted his estate in lasciviousness and luxury, and by a harsh reduction came to himself, reflecting with shame upon his folly and rebellion; and the sense of his misery

(not a more ingenuous or noble principle at first) compelled him to go to his father, to try what his affections would do. And it was not a vain presumption, for he found the effects of fatherly and compassionate love: "When he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said, father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, bring out the best robes, and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." The design of Christ was to represent his heavenly Father in that parable: and to wounded spirits that feel the intolerable weight of sin, the mercy and mildness of the gospel is to be exhibited. God is rich in mercy to all that call upon him in truth. But to tell sinners who securely proceed in their sinful ways, that they may be saved at last, and notwithstanding their presumptuous repulses of God's calls to his service, yet think they may come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, and be rewarded, is to give countenance and protection to sin, and to harden them to destruction. Poison is not cured by giving food, but antidotes, that put nature into a passion till it be expelled. The terrors of the Lord can only prove medicinal to such depraved souls.

To conclude this argument, let us seriously consider the revelation God has afforded of himself in the gospel. He is a Father and a judge; justice and holiness as well as mercy are essential to his nature, that our affections may be accordingly moved towards him. "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Presumption and despair are very dishonourable to God, and pernicious to the soul: the one destroys the fear, the other the love of God. But hope contempered with fear, has an excellent influence in the christian life. As the ballast and the wind are both necessary, that the ship may sail safely; without the wind the ship can make no way; and without ballast it is in danger of oversetting by every gust. Thus hope and fear are necessary to bring us safely to heaven. Fear without hope chills, and stupifies the vigour and alacrity of the soul, that it cannot come to God: and hope without fear,

makes it vain and careless of its duty, and liable to be overthrown by every pleasing temptation. Briefly, let us rightly understand the tenor of the evangelical promises of pardon and grace; they are conditional, and applicable only to penitent believers. And unfeigned faith purifies the heart, works by love, and is the living principle of universal obedience. And repentance unto life is productive of all good fruits in their season. Without faith and repentance we can neither be justified in this world, nor glorified in the next. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: as a man sows, so shall he reap. He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

CHAP. VIII.

The preserving ourselves from presumptuous sins, a means to render death comfortable. The zealous discharge of the duties of our callings, and endeavours to glorify God, and do good according to our abilities, will sweeten the thoughts of death. An indifference of mind and affections to earthly things makes death less fearful. Frequent converse with God in holy duties, makes death desirable. A steadfast belief of future happiness makes death desirable. An excitation to the saints to die with courage and cheerfulness. It is our duty to die with resignation and with patience, and earnest desires to be with Christ. It is very becoming a christian to die with joy and thanksgiving.

ii. THE careful preserving ourselves from wilful presumptuous sins, is a happy means to render death comfortable to us. Sins of ignorance and infirmity, of sudden surreption and surprise, the best men are not freed from in the present state: and being the daily motive of our grief, and serious circumspection to prevent them, are consistent with the regular peace of conscience, and the friendship and favour of God. But great sins in their matter being so contrary to natural conscience, and supernatural grace,

or sins presumptuous in the manner of their commission, such as proceed from the choice of the perverse will against the enlightenend mind, whatever the matter or kind of them be, are direct rebellion against God, a despising of his command, and provoke his pure eyes, and make the aspect of death fearful. The Spirit seals our pardon and title to heaven as the Holy Spirit; his testimony, that "we are the children of God, and heirs of glory," is concurrent with the renewed conscience, and distinguished from the ignorant presumptions, blind conjectures, and carnal security of the unholy. As the sanctifying Spirit he distinguishes true christians from the lost world, appropriates them to God, confirms their present interest in the promises of the gospel, and their future hopes. Briefly, grace is the most sensible effect and sign of God's special favour, the fruit of election, and the earnest of glory: and the truth of grace is most clearly and certainly made evident by the continual efficacy of it in the conversation. The observation of our hearts to suppress unholy affections, and of our senses to prevent them, a constant course of holiness in our lives (though many frailties will cleave to the best) is usually rewarded with great peace here.

God has established a connexion between our obedience and his comforts. Those that keep themselves pure from the defilements of the world, have the white stone promised, the bright jewel of assurance of God's pardoning and rewarding mercy. We read of Enoch, "that he walked with God," was a star shining in a corrupt age; the tenor of his life was holy, and he was translated to heaven without seeing death. Though this was an extraordinary dispensation, yet there is a peculiar reward analogical to it; for those who walk circumspectly, they shall not see death with its terrors, but usually have a holy cheerfulness, a peaceful joy in their passage through the dark valley to heaven. But presumptuous sins against external and internal restraints, the convincing law of God, and the directions of conscience, (to which even the saints of God are liable here, as appears by David's earnest prayer to be preserved from them) such sins grieve the Holy Spirit, and wound our spirits, and, if continued, sequester us from the comfortable privileges of the gospel, and render us unfit for the kingdom of heaven. And when they are retracted by repentance, yet there often remains a bitter remembrance of them; as deep wounds, though cured, yet are felt in

change of weather. And sometimes a spring-tide of doubts and fears breaks into humble penitent souls, in the last hours: though death brings them safely, yet not comfortably to heaven.

iii. The zealous discharge of the duties of our place and calling, the conjunction of our resolutions and endeavours to glorify God; and do good according to our abilities and opportunities of service, sweetens the thoughts of death to us. For the true end and perfection of life is the glory of God; and when with fidelity it is employed in order to it, death brings us to the blessed rest from our labours. Our Saviour when he was to leave the world, addressed himself to his Father, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. And now, Father, glorify me with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John 17. A christian that imitates and honours Christ, and with diligence perseveres in well-doing, may with a humble confidence in the divine mercy expect the promised reward. The reflection upon a well spent life is joined with a joyful prospect of God's favour and acceptance above. But to the careless and remiss, to those who are wilfully negligent of their duty, how fearful is death that summons them to give an account of their talents to the righteous Lord?

iv. A holy indifference of affection to present things, makes it easy to part with them, and death less fearful to us. David, though a king, declares he was a stranger on earth, not only with respect to his transient condition, but his inward disposition; and that he was "as a weaned child" from the admired vanities of the world. Chrysostom in a letter to Ciriacus, who was tenderly sensible of his banishment, wrote to him, 'you now begin to lament my banishment, but I have done so for a long time: for since I knew that heaven was my country, I have esteemed the whole earth a place of exilement. Constantinople, from whence I am expelled, is as distant from paradise as the desert to which they send me.' But when our affections are set upon external things, and we are irregular in our aims, intemperate in our use, and immoderate in our delights, how sensible and cutting is the division from them? How bitter is death that deprives a carnal wretch of all the materials of his frail felicity? What a storm of passions is raised, to lose all his good things at once? For it is a rule in nature, what is possessed with tran-

sporting joy, is lost with excessive sorrow. As the ivy that twines so closely about the tree, and is intimately fastened by so many roots as there are branches, cannot be plucked away without rending the bark with it; so when the world, that was as it were incarnated with the heart, is taken away, the heart itself is grievously rent by the violent separation. * And the infelicity of carnal and worldly persons is heavily aggravated, in that the guilt in procuring or abusing those treasures and delights that they leave here with so great sorrow, will cleave to them, and give testimony against them before their Judge. But when the affections are loose to the world, and set upon heaven, our leaving the earth is no loss but gain, and our separation from the body of flesh is with that alacrity, as the putting off a vile garment to be clothed with a royal robe. It was the wise counsel of Tertullian † to the women of the first ages of the church, not to value and love the jewels and ornaments of gold, that they might be more ready and resolved to obtain by death, martyrdom, and by martyrdom, eternal glory. And that we may disentangle our souls from those voluntary bands that fasten us to present things, we must have a sincere uncorrupted judgment of their meanness. The apostle exhorts christians to moderation in their temper and conversation, with respect to the business and enjoyments here; that "they who have wives, be as though they had none; that those that rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of the world passeth away." To a wise and pondering observer, what comparison is there between shadows and dreams, and substantial everlasting blessedness? If men had the same opinion of this world whilst they live, as they will have when they are to die, they would not inordinately seek it. They who have magnified temporal honours and riches, and lived in pleasures without remorse, yet in their dying hours, when men speak with most feeling and least affectation, how have they vilified those empty appearances of happiness? with what moving expressions

* Hæc enim est infœlicitas hominum, propter quæ peccant. Morientes hic dimittunt, & ipsa peccata secum portant. *Aug.*

† Stemus expeditæ ad omnem vim, nihil habentes quod relinquere timeamus; retinacula ista sunt spei nostræ. *De cult. Fœm.*

declared the vanity and brevity of worldly things? As when the Israelites were to go through the river Jordan, that opened itself to make a free and dry passage for them; the lower part of its waters ran into the dead sea, and utterly failed, Josh. 3. 16. but the waters that came from above, rose up and appeared like a mountain. * Thus when men come to the universal passage from this to the next life, inferior things absolutely fail, and are lost in the dead sea; but the things above, that are eternal, then appear in their true greatness, exceeding all human comprehension: from hence is the change of mind and language concerning the one and other.

v. Solemn, affectionate, and frequent converse with God in religious duties, will render death not fearful to us. The whole life of a christian, as such, is a "continual communion with the Father, and with Jesus Christ." 1 John 1. 3. For he performs all good works by divine grace communicated "from above," and refers all to the divine honour. As in a pair of compasses, one foot is fixed in the centre, while the other moves in the circumference: so the heart of a christian is in heaven, his aims are for God, whilst he is active here in the world. His natural and civil actions are heightened to a supernatural end: and thus "his conversation is in heaven." But this was spoken of before: and that which is now specified, is the more immediate service of God in holy meditation, prayer, and the ordinances of the gospel, which is the noblest part of the spiritual life.

Our blessed Saviour who was a comprehensor upon earth, always saw the face of God, and invariably sought his glory in all things, yet had his special times of prayer and heavenly communion with God, and the most glorious testimonies of his favour in those times. Our communion with God here is as true as in heaven, but the influence and fruition is different according to our capacity. When the soul feels the vigorous exercise of the thoughts and affections upon God, and the raised operations of grace in holy duties, it is as certain a sign of God's favour and acceptance, as when fire descended from heaven to consume the sacrifice. And often our affectionate duties are rewarded with sensible consolations, and holy souls are dismissed from the throne of grace, as they shall be received at the throne of glory,

* Ad instar montis intumescentis, apparebant procul.

with the reviving testimonies of God's approbation. Now the assurance of God's love conquers the fear of death.

This communion must be frequent. As love and respects between friends are maintained by constant visits and letters, and mutual confidence arises from acquaintance: so by the interchange of holy duties and divine favours, we preserve a lively sense of God's love, and a humble familiarity with his majesty, that his presence is not a terror to us. A christian that walks with God here, when he leaves the world, (to use the words of a dying saint) 'changes his room, but not his company.' God was always with him on earth, and he shall be ever with God in heaven.

But cold and seldom converse begets strangeness, and that makes us shy of God. When religious duties are performed as a complimental visit without zealous affections, or used only in times of affliction and exigeney, as cordial waters in swooning fits, the divine presence is uncomfortable to us. They who prefer carnal sweets before acquaintance with God, cannot with peace and joy think of appearing before him. O how unwelcome is death to such! "for then the Spirit returns to God that gave it."

vi. Let us strengthen our belief of the blessed state after death. Divine truths lose their influence and efficacy when they are not steadfastly believed. "Faith is the substance of things not seen, and the evidence or conviction of things hoped for." Heb. 11. 1. The Spirit confirms our faith, not by a pure physical act, but by convincing reason of the truth of the gospel. The life of Christ so glorious in holiness, his doctrine so becoming the wisdom and other excellent attributes of the Deity; his miracles so great, numerous, open, and beneficial, not merely to surprise the spectators with astonishment, but to touch their hearts; his death foretold by the prophets, and exactly agreeing in all the circumstances of the predictions; his resurrection the most noble operation of the divine power, are the strongest proofs that what he has revealed as the counsel of God for our redemption, and the preparations of glory for the saints in heaven, are divine truths. And the efficacy of the Spirit of Christ in sanctifying his disciples in all ages, is a continual and as satisfying an argument that the gospel is derived from God the fountain of truth, as extraordinary miracles. For holiness is as inseparable a pro-

perty of the divine nature as omnipotence, and the sanctification of the soul as divine an effect as the resurrection of the body. Now in the gospel God enters into covenant with obedient believers, "to be their God," a title and relation, that supposing them the most happy here, all the enjoyments of this world cannot fulfil. This covenant is not dissolved by death, for he uses this style after the death of his faithful servants: and from hence it follows they are partakers of his glory and joys in the next life. For the honour of his veracity is most dear to him. The psalmist declares that he has "magnified his word above all his name." No perfections of his nature are more sacred and inviolable than his truth. The foundations of nature shall be overturned, and the most solid parts of the creation destroyed, but his promises shall be completely accomplished. We are assured by his infallible authority, that "there remains a rest for the people of God." And "he that receives this testimony, sets to his seal that God is true;" honours the truth of God's word, and binds himself more firmly to his service, and is encouraged to leave this sensible world for that which is infinitely better. Our confidence and patience in welldoing, and in suffering the utmost evil to nature, is from the pregnant apprehensions of the reality of eternal things. "We know," saith the apostle, "if our earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5. 1. This fortified him against the terrors of death. When "Stephen saw the heavens open, and the Son of God ready to receive him," with what courage and constancy did he encounter the bloody rage of his murderers? Faith supplies the want of vision, it pierces the clouds, opens a window in heaven, sees the crowns of righteousness prepared for the saints, and sweetens the bitterest passage to it. But if our faith be weak and wavering, our courage will decline in the needful hour. It is with christians in their last passage from earth to heaven, as with Saint Peter walking upon the waters to Christ: whilst his faith was firm in Christ, he went upon the waves as on the firm land; but upon the rising of a storm his faith sunk into fear, and he sunk in the waters; till our Saviour upon his earnest prayer, "Lord, save me," took hold of him, and raised him with that compassionate reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

The last use is, to excite the saints to die with that courage and cheerfulness "as becomes the gospel of Christ." The encouragement of Joshua to the Israelites against the giants that terrified them from entering into the land of Canaan, the type of heaven, "be not afraid of them, they are bread for us," we shall obtain an easy conquest over them, is applicable to this purpose: do not fear death, the enemy that interposes between us and the true Canaan; for our conflict shall be the means of our victory, and triumphant possession of the holy and blessed land above. This is very honourable to our Redeemer, and recommends godliness to the judgment, affections, and practice of others. St. Basil * tells of a custom to anoint the tops of doves wings with some fragrant liquor, that mixing in company with other doves, they might by the scent allure them to follow to the dove-houses. Thus when holy persons live and die with peaceful joy, those that converse with them, are drawn by that fragrance of paradise to apply themselves to serious religion.

It is the apostle's consolatory advice to believers, "not to be sorrowful for those that sleep in JESUS, as those that are without hope." 1 Thess. 4.

When Jacob saw his beloved son's coat rent and stained with blood, he abandoned himself to desperate sorrow, and continued mourning for his death, when Joseph was advanced in authority and dignity next to Pharaoh in the kingdom of Egypt. Thus when we see the garment of mortality rent by diseases, we mourn for departed saints, as if death had absolutely destroyed them, when their souls are reigning in glory. This immoderate sorrow is a heathenish passion, suitable to their ignorance of the future happy state, but very unbecoming the plenary assurance the gospel affords us of it. Indeed for the wicked to die with fears and palpitations of heart, to be surrounded with impendent horrors, when such a precipice and depth of misery is before them, is very just and reasonable; but for the saints to die uncomfortably under inordinate fears, is a disparagement to the "blessed hope" established upon "the revelation of life and immortality by the gospel."

Now in three things I shall propound the duty of dying christians.

* Epist. Jul.

1. To submit to the divine pleasure with resigned spirits, as to the means, the manner, and time of death. God has a sovereign right and dominion over us. The present life is his most free favour, and he may justly resume it when he pleases. His will should be the first and last rule of ours. Whether he gently untwines the band of life, or violently breaks it, we must placidly without reluctance yield up ourselves. By what means soever death comes, all second causes are moved by an impression from above, in what age of life soever; all our times are appointed by the divine counsel: and a saint ought with that readiness and meek submission to receive it, as if he heard an express voice from heaven calling him to God, and say in his heart with Samuel, "here I am, thou didst call me." This is the last act of our obedience, and very pleasing to God. We read of the marvellous * consent of Abraham and his son Isaac, the father to offer up his son, and the son his life, (that were both the gifts of God) in compliance with the divine command, and from heaven he declared his high approbation of it. "This is to make a virtue of necessity, and turn nature into grace." But discontent and reluctancy, as if our lives were our own, and taken from us unjustly or unseasonably, is rebellious unthankfulness, unbecoming a creature, much more a true christian, who exchanges a perishing life for that which is eternal.

2. To receive death not only with patience, but earnest desires to be with Christ. I know death is naturally unwelcome. Our Saviour tells St. Peter, "when thou art old, another shall bind thee, and lead thee where thou wouldst not," John 21. 41. signifying his martyrdom. The circumstance "when thou art old" is remarkable, † and intimates the natural unwillingness to die, when there was little time to live. But his rational sanctified will was superior and prevalent. The universal desire of the saints is to be happy in the presence of God: for the divine nature communicated to them is intelligent, and inclining towards its chief good: and if the obtaining it were not by "being un-

* Ille exerit gladium, ille cirvicem, uno voto una devotione; sub tanto non dicam humanitatis, sed potius naturæ ipsius metu, læti sunt.

† Secutus a corpore volebat esse cum Christo, sed si fieri posset præter mortis molestiam. Nolens ad eam venit, sed volens eam vicit. *Aug. Tract,* 123. *in Joan.*

clothed, but clothed upon" by an immediate translation to heaven, how willingly would they leave this world? But there is a bitterness in death that makes it unpleasant; and many holy souls that desire the glorious liberty in heaven, yet are loath to leave their prison. Now there are so many arguments to make the saints desirous of dying, that methinks since life is chiefly valued and dear to them, as it is the way to heaven, when they are come to that blessed end, it should not be longer desirable. What is this lower world that chains us so fast? It is the devil's circuit wherein he ranges, seeking "whom he may devour:" it is the theatre of contentions. The low aspire to rise; the exalted fear to fall: the poor envy the rich, and the rich despise the poor. It is a foreign country to the saints, and as pilgrims and strangers, they are liable to reproaches, injuries, and hard dealings from the wicked, the natives of the earth. What is the present momentary life that so enamours us? It is surrounded with temptations, oppressed with fears, ardent with irregular desires, and continually spent in vanity or vexation. In adversity it is depressed and melancholy; in prosperity foolish and proud. It is a real infelicity under the deceitful appearance of felicity. But above all other motives, the evil of sin from which we can not be clearly exempted here, should render death desirable. The best suffer internal divisions between "the law of the flesh, and the law of the mind;" as Rebecca felt the twins, Esau and Jacob, repugnant in her womb. How hard is it to be continually watching the heart that corruptions do not break out, and the senses that temptations do not break in? How difficult to order the affections, to raise what is drooping, and suppress what is rebellious? For they are like the people of whom the historian speaks, *qui nec totam servitutem pati possunt, nec totam libertatem.* How many enemies of our salvation are lodged in our own bosoms? The falls of the saints give sad evidence of this. If the body were unspotted from the world, as in the creation of man, there might be a just plea of our unwillingness to part with it; but since it is the incentive and instrument of sin, we should desire to be dissolved, that we might be perfectly holy. Death is the final remedy of all the temporal and spiritual evils to which we are liable here. And the love of Christ should make us willing to part with all the endearments of this life, nay desirous to enter into the celestial paradise, though we must

pass under the angel's sword, the stroke of death, to come into his presence. He infinitely deserves our love, for we owe our salvation and eternal glory to the merit of his humiliation, and the power of his exaltation. With what earnest affections did St. Paul desire "to be dissolved and to be with Christ?" Phil. 1. Love gave wings of fire to his soul, ardent desires mounting to heaven. How valiant were the martyrs in expressing acts of love to Christ? How boldly did they encounter death that interposed between them and the sight of his glory? Their love was hotter than the flames that consumed them. They as willingly left their bodies, as Elias let fall his mantle to ascend to heaven. And how does it upbraid the coldness of our love, that we are so contented to be here, absent from our Saviour. That the moles of the earth, who never saw the light of the sun, and feed on bitter roots, are pleased in their dark receptacles, is no wonder; but if birds that are refreshed with his cheerful beams, and feed on sweet fruits, should willingly be confined in caverns of the earth, it were unnaturally strange. Thus for Pagans (and those who are so in heart, though different in profession) that are so short-sighted and depraved, that they only perceive and affect present sensible things, for them to be unwilling to die is no wonder; for then all that is valuable and delightful to them is lost for ever: but for those who are enlightened by the revelation of God so clearly concerning the state of glory, and have tasted the goodness of the Lord, and know the incomparable difference between the mean and frail felicity here, and the inestimable immutable felicity hereafter, for them to be unwilling to leave this world for that which is infinitely better, is astonishing. Such was the love of our Saviour, that his personal glory in heaven did not fully content him, without the saints partaking of it with him: "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." John 17. If our hearts do not answer his, it is a sad indication that we have not an interest in him: for the application of his merits is always joined with the imitation of his virtues, and the reflection of his love. The lovers of Christ will join with the inflamed spouse, "draw us, and we will run after thee:" Cant. 1. O loosen our affections from this world, that we may readily ascend to thee: they will renew the sighs of holy David in his banishment, "O when shall we come and appear before God!"

Lastly. To die with thanksgiving and joy. It is usual to compare this life to a voyage: the scripture is the chart that describes the coasts we must pass, and the rocks we must avoid; faith is the compass that directs the course we must steer; love is the rudder that governs the motion of the ship; hope fills the sails. Now what passenger does not rejoice at the discovery of his country where his estate and heart is, and more at the near approach to the port where he is to land? Is not heaven the country of the saints? Is not their birth from above, and their tendency to their original? And is not the blessed bosom of Christ their port? O what joyful thanksgivings are due to God, when by his Spirit and providence, they have happily finished their voyage through such * dangerous seas, and are coming into the land of the living? How joyful was to Noah the coming of the dove with an olive branch, to show him the deluge was assuaged, and the time was come of his freedom from the troublesome company of animals, and from the straitness and darkness of the ark, to go forth and possess the world? How joyful should death be to a saint, that comes like the dove in the evening, to assure him the deluge of misery is ceased, and the time is come of his enlargement from the body, his deliverance from the wretched sinful society here, and his possessing the divine world? Holy souls are immediately transported by the angels to Christ, and by him presented to his Father, without "spot or wrinkle," complete in holiness, and prepared for communion with him in glory. How joyfully are they received into heaven by our Saviour and the blessed spirits? they are the reward of his sufferings, the precious and dear purchase of his blood. The angels that rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, do much more at the glorification of a saint: and the "church of the first-born" who have before us entered into glory, have a new accession of joy, when their younger brethren arrive to the undefiled immortal inheritance. And is it not very becoming believers joyfully to ascend to the seat of blessedness, to the happy society that inspires mutual joys for ever? For our encouragement there are numerous instances of believers that have with peace and joy, though in various degrees, passed through "the dark valley to the inheritance of light." Some have died

* Quamdiu in salo isto, tamdiu inter naufragia.

with more joy than they lived, and triumphed over the last enemy with the vocal praises of God: * others with silent affections have quietly commended their spirits into his hand. Some have inward refreshings and support; others exuberant joys and ravishments, as if the light of glory shined into them, or the veil of flesh were drawn, and their spirits were present with the invisible world. Some of the martyrs in their cruellest sufferings felt such impressions of confidence and alacrity, that as in the house of Lamech there were accorded at the same time two discordant callings by the two brothers; Jubal the inventor of the harp and organ, and Tubal-Cain the first artificer in brass and iron, Gen. 4. the one practised on instruments of music, breathing harmonious sounds and melodies; the other used hammers and anvils, making noise and tumult: so in some persons, whilst the heaviest strokes fell on their bodies, their souls were ravished with the sweetest joy and exultation. Indeed it is not thus always with the saints: for though sin be pardoned, yet the apprehensions of guilt may remain. When a stream is disturbed, it does not truly represent the object: when the affections are disordered, the mind does not judge aright of a christian's state. A serpent may hiss when it has lost its sting. Death may terrify when it cannot hurt us. I doubt not but some excellent saints have been in anxieties to the last, till their fears were dispelled by the actual fruition of blessedness. As the sun sometimes sets in dark clouds, and rises in a glorious horizon. We read our evidences for heaven by the light of God's countenance: his image is made visible in our souls by the illustration of his Spirit: and he exercises prerogative in the dispensation of his comforts. It is his pleasure to bestow extraordinary favours on some, and deny them to others that are as holy. But every penitent believer has just cause of joy in death: for Jesus Christ has reconciled God, destroyed satan, and conquered death: and the last day of his life is the first of his glory.

* Accitus sum ad id miraculi, videre exultantem in morte hominem, & insultantem morti. *Bern.* 26. *Serm. in Cant.*

ETERNAL JUDGMENT.

Acts xvii. 31.

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

CHAP. I.

The coherence of the text opened. The determining a time, and the designation of the person to judge the world are expressed. God is king of the world by creation. The two principal parts of his sovereignty, are giving laws to rule his subjects, and to pass final judgment according to those laws. His essential attributes qualify him for the exercise of government. The Son of God united to the human nature, is wisely appointed to judge men. The quality of this office requires no less person, upon the account of its superlative dignity, and immense difficulty. It is the reward of his sufferings. The day of judgment is styled the great day in several respects. To define the particular time is beyond the knowledge of any mere creature.

SAINT Paul had this title of honour eminently conferred upon him, the apostle of the Gentiles: this office he performed with persevering diligence, diffusing "the light of life to those that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death." In this chapter we have recorded the substance of his sermon to the Athenians; wherein his admirable zeal and prudence are remarkable, in the matter and order of his discourse, to convince and persuade them to receive the saving truth of the gospel. He first lays down the prineiples of natural religion, to prepare them for the more easy

belief of supernatural revealed religion. The depravation of the minds of men was in no instance more prodigious than in their vilifying conceits of the Deity: they attributed his name and honour to various idols, and ascribed to him their own figure, and, which was infinitely more unworthy and dishonourable, their own passions and vices. They adored their own vain imaginations. The idols of their hearts were erected on their altars. Venus was a goddess, because impure love reigned in their breast. Bacchus had religious rites, because sensual pleasures, as sweet as wine, intoxicated their spirits. These errors, as gross as impious, were universal: the philosophers themselves were not exempted from the contagion. The apostle therefore makes use of the clearest arguments, to give authority to the plain conspiring voice of nature, that had so long in vain recalled them from idolatry to the worship of the only true God. He therefore declares that the divine Maker of all things, "the Father of spirits, could not be represented by corporeal and corruptible things," ver. 29. but was to be acknowledged and adored in a manner becoming his spiritual and infinite perfections. That "he made all nations of one blood," ver. 26. though distinguished in their habitations and times, that they might seek and serve the one universal Creator. And though the pagan world for many ages had lived in an unnatural oblivion of God, and he seemed unconcerned for their violation of his laws, yet it was not from the defect of justice, but the direction of his wisdom, that his patience was so long extended to them. And this he proves by the new and most express declaration of his will: "But now he commanded all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he raised him from the dead."

In the words, the eternal counsels of God are revealed in two great things.

First. The determining a time wherein he will righteously judge the world: "He hath appointed a day."

Secondly. The designation of the person by whom he will perform that eminent part of sovereignty: "by Jesus Christ, whom he hath raised from the dead."

In order to the handling of the main point, it is requisite to premise briefly some propositions.

1. That God is the universal monarch of the world, and has supreme authority to govern reasonable creatures, antecedent to their election and consent. The psalmist calls to the heathens, "Know ye that the Lord is God," Psal. 100. 3. that is, the most glorious being, and absolute sovereign; "for it is he that made us, and not we ourselves." He formed all things by his almighty goodness, and is king by creation.

2. The two principal and necessary parts of his sovereignty are, to give laws for the ruling of his subjects, and to pass final judgment upon them for their obedience or disconformity to his precepts. Mere natural agents are regulated by a wise establishment, that is the law of their creation. The sun and stars are moved according to the just points of their compass. The angels are under a law in heaven, "and obey his commandments." The human nature of Christ, though advanced to the highest capacity of a creature, "yet received a law." And this whole work upon earth for our salvation, was an act of obedience to the will of God. If a prince out of affection to his friend will leave his own dominions, and live privately with him in a foreign country, he must be subject to the laws of that place. Indeed it is not conceivable that a creature should be without a law; for this is to make it supreme and independent: supreme, in not being liable to a superior power to confine and order it; independent, as to its being and operations; for dependance necessarily infers subjection. There is a visible connexion between those titles; "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King." Isa. 33. 22. And sometimes in scripture his sovereignty is intimated in the title of judge: thus in that humble expostulation of Abraham for Sodom; "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" He addresses his request to God under that title, to soften his power, and incline his clemency to save the wicked for their sakes who were comparatively righteous, that is, innocent "of their crying sins."

3. As his right to govern and judge the world is natural, so are his attributes, his wisdom, holiness, justice and power, that qualify and render him most worthy to exercise this government. These are finite separable qualities in angels or men, but essential perfections to the Deity. It is more rational to conceive that things may be congealed by the heat of fire, or turned black by whiteness, than that the least act of injustice can be done by

the righteous Lord. The apostle rejects with extreme detestation, the blasphemous charge of unrighteousness in God's proceedings: "Is God unrighteous that taketh vengeance? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" Rom. 3. 5, 6. He may as soon renounce his nature, and cease to be God, for as such he is necessarily Judge of the world, as violate his own perfections in his judicial proceedings with us.

4. God being invisible in his own nature, hath most wisely ordained the last judgment of the world to be transacted by a visible person; because men are to be judged, and the whole process of judgment with them, will be for things done in the body. The person appointed for this great work, is Jesus Christ the Son of God united to the human nature. "The Father judgeth no man," John 5. 22. not as if he descended from the throne, and divested himself of his supremacy, but not immediately; "but hath committed all judgment to the Son." And it follows, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself: and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man;" ver. 26, 27. that is, in the quality of Mediator, for the reward of his sufferings. The quality of this office requires no less person for the discharge of it, than the Son of God.

(1.) Upon the account of its superlative dignity. No mere creature is capable of such a glorious commission. To pass a sovereign sentence upon angels and men, is a royalty reserved for God himself. We read that "no man in heaven or earth was able to open the sealed book of his eternal counsels, as unsearchable as deep," Rev. 5. only Jesus Christ, who was in the "Bosom of the Father," the seat of his counsels and compassions, and was acquainted with all his glorious secrets, could unfold the order of the divine decrees about the church. And if no creature was worthy to be admitted into God's counsel, much less to be taken into his throne. The eternal Son, "the express image of his person," is alone fit to be authorized representative in judgment. Our Saviour declares that the Father invested the Son with this regal power, that "all men should honour the Son," John 5. 23. with the same religious reverence, and supreme adoration, "as they honour the Father."

(2.) Upon the account of the immense difficulty no mere creature is able to discharge it. To judge the world, includes

two things: 1. To pass a righteous and irrevocable judgment upon men for all things done in this life. 2. The actual execution of the sentence. And for this no less than infinite wisdom, and infinite power are necessary. If a select number of angels of the highest order were deputed, yet they could not manage the judicial trial of one man: for besides the innumerable acts and omissions in one life, the secrets of the heart, from whence the guilt or goodness of moral actions is principally derived, are not open to them. He alone that discerns all things, can require an account of all.

(3.) The Son of Man is invested with this high office as the reward of his sufferings. We must distinguish between the essential and economical power of Christ. The Son of God, considered in his divine nature, has an original power of judgment equal with the Father; but considered as Mediator, has a power by delegation. In the quality of the Son of Man, he is inferior in diguity to the Father. The apostle declares this in that scale of subordination of the creatures to believers, and of believers to Christ, and of Christ to God; "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And observing the beautiful order that arises from the superiority and dependance between things, he saith, "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." Now this power by commission was conferred upon him as the reward of his sufferings. The apostle expressly declares it, that Christ "being in the form of God," without any usurpation truly equal to him in divine perfections and majesty, "humbled himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." His victorious sufferings are the titles to his triumphs; his being so ignominiously depressed and condemned by men, is the just reason of his advancement to judge the world.

5. There is a day appointed wherein the Son of Man will appear in sensible glory, and exercise his judicial power upon angels and men. He is now "seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and the celestial spheres are under his feet:

universal nature feels the power of his sceptre: he reigns in the hearts of the saints by his word and Spirit, and restrains the fury of his enemies in what degree he pleases: but still his servants are in distress, and his rebellious enemies insolently break his laws; and the curtains of heaven conceal his glory from us: therefore a time is prefixed when in the face of the world he will make an eternal difference by the rewards and punishments, between the righteous and the wicked, and his government shall have its complete and glorious issue. This is styled the "Judgment of the great day."

(1.) With respect to the appearance of the Judge. When the law was given from Mount Sinai, the mountain was covered with fire, and the voice of God as loud as thunder proclaimed it from the midst of the flames, so that the whole army of the Israelites was prostrate on the plain, struck with a sacred horror, and almost dead at the amazing sights and sounds. From hence it is said, that "in his right hand was a fiery law." And if the Lawgiver appeared in such terrible majesty at the proclaiming the law, how much more when he shall come to revenge the transgressions of it? It is set forth in scripture in the most lofty and magnificent expressions: "He shall come in his Father's glory, and his own glory, and the glory of the angels." Luke 9. 26. A devouring fire shall go before him, to consume all the works of the universe. He shall descend from the highest heavens, glorious in the attendance of innumerable angels, but more in his own majesty, and sit on a "radiant throne high above all."

(2.) It is great with respect to the appearance of those who are to be judged: all the apostate angels, and the universal progeny of Adam. The bowels of the earth, and the bottom of the sea, and all the elements shall give up the dead. The mighty angels, the winged ministers of justice, shall fly to all parts, and attach the wicked to bring them as miserable prisoners before that high tribunal. And those blessed powerful spirits shall congregate the righteous, to present them at his right hand.

(3.) It is great with respect to what shall be then done: he shall perform the most glorious and consummate act of his regal office; after a righteous trial, pronounce judgment, upon which the eternal destiny of the world depends. And immediately the saints shall ascend with him to the everlasting mansions of glory, and the wicked shall be swallowed up in the fiery gulph for ever.

To define the particular time when this shall be accomplished, is beyond the knowledge of the angels of highest dignity. It is *inter arcana imperii*, among the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. It is observable that God has revealed the times precisely wherein some great events should come to pass; after how many years the Israelites should be freed from Egyptian bondage; after what space of time they should be restored from the captivity of Babylon; when the Messiah should die for the expiation of sin: but there is no designation by certain characters of the particular day, nor year, nor age in any prophecy, of our Saviour's coming to judgment. And of this an account may be given. The special end of those predictions was, that those who lived to see their accomplishment, notwithstanding the seeming impossibilities, might believe the truth and power of God to fulfil the revelation of his purposes for the time to come. But at the last day, all the promises and threatenings will be fulfilled, nothing will remain to be the object of faith; and consequently it was superfluous to declare the certain time, since the exact accomplishment of it according to the prediction, will neither be useful to confirm believers, or convert infidels.

Lastly, The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most convincing and commanding evidence of this doctrine, that he shall judge the world. For he was charged with blasphemy deserving of death for this testimony: "I say unto you, hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Mat. 26. 64. He dedicated martyrdom in his own sufferings. Now God in raising him from the dead, confirmed the truth of his testimony by that visible miracle, and the belief of it converted the world to christianity.

CHAP. II.

God will righteously judge the world by Jesus Christ. The righteousness of God's judicial proceedings will appear by considering the equity of the law, the rule of judgment. The law of nature considered in its precepts and penalties. The precepts are such as become the Creator to give, and the reasonable creature to receive. An answer to the objection, that the law being pure and perfect, and man in a frail state, it seems hard to require perfect obedience from him, and condemn him for failings. The law of faith considered. Our innocence being lost, repentance is allowed. Sincere obedience is accepted, where perfection is wanting. Unfeigned faith in the Redeemer is the condition of our justification and glorification. The not complying with the gospel-terms of salvation, proceeds from the perverse wills of men.

I Will now proceed to illustrate and prove the main point, which is this:

That God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.

The Mediator, who shall be Judge in the union of both natures, considered as the Son of God, is essentially holy and righteous; and considered as the Son of Man, was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In him all virtues shined in their absolute purity: and who is so worthy and qualified to reward holiness and punish wickedness as "the holy One of God?" It is said of him, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore thy God hath anointed thee with oil of gladness above thy fellows," Heb. 1. 9. consecrated him to the regal office, and enriched his human nature with endowments suitable to it. It was prophesied of him, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity." Isa. 11. 2, 3, 4. Human judgments are often unrighteous, from vicious respects and affections that pervert the will,

or fair appearances that deceive the understanding: by gifts or guile, innocence is cast, and guilt acquitted; but the Judge of the world is inflexible to partiality, and all things "are entirely open to his sight." In the act of judgment he is represented "sitting on a white throne," Rev. 20. 11. the emblem of unspotted holiness.

The righteousness of God's judicial proceedings will appear, by considering three things.

I. The equity of his law, the rule of the great and final judgment.

II. The evidence of the facts and matter, which shall be produced as the reason of judgment.

III. The impartiality of the sentence.

I. The equity of the law which shall be the rule of the last judgment. This will appear by considering i. the law of nature, and the law of faith, in their precepts and ii. the penalties annexed to enforce the observation of them.

i. The law of nature, which is the rule of man's duty, will be the rule of judgment: for "without the law there is no transgression;" and consequently a person is unaccountable for his actions. This law is composed of such rules as are most becoming the wise and gracious Creator to give, and the reasonable creature to receive and obey: for they entirely agree and concentre in his glory, and the good of his subjects. The apostle adorns the law with the most excellent elegy; "it is holy, just, and good." Rom. 7. 12. Holy, as it enjoins all acts of piety to God: the adoration of his majesty resulting from his inexpressible divine perfections, the imitation of his purity, a reliance on his goodness, a resignation to his most wise providence, and a dutiful obedience to his will. Such a sense of our dependance and subjection to God, is the proper character of the reasonable creature, as dignified above inanimate and mere sensitive beings. "The law is just," as it directs us how to demean ourselves in our various relations. Justice is the cement of societies, without which they disband and fall into confusion. And the sum of the law is virtually comprised in one rule, "To do to others as we would they should do to us," than which nothing is more equal. It is good to man that keeps it, commanding nothing but what is influential upon his well-being here and for ever. It does not infringe his true freedom, but allows him unstained delights, and

enjoins what is proper to advance and secure his dignity, felicity and perfection. It forbids every thing that defiles and debases him, and causes a degeneration from his native excellency. If we prescind in our thoughts the sacred authority of the Lawgiver, all the precepts of the law for their moral goodness deserve our esteem and choice, and entire observation. The sanctified mind approves them universally. "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right," saith holy David, Psal. 119. 128. Nay, in the wicked there is an intellectual assent to the goodness of the law, though the corrupt will doth not embrace it: there are some inclinations and wishes to obey it, but controlled by vicious desires. It is said of the convinced sinner, "Thou knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent." Rom. 2. 18.

It may be objected, that the law being pure, and man in a frail state, surrounded with innumerable temptations, to require perfect obedience from him, and condemn him for his failings, seems hard. The law lays a restraint upon all the senses, and forbids all fleshly lusts: this may be easy to separate souls, but for men to live in the body, as if they were out of it, to be always vigilant against the insinuations or attacks of sin, is impossible. Thus the carnal mind is apt with some colour, to traduce the righteousness of God's government. But it will be clearly vindicated, by considering;

(1.) The law supposes man in a state of integrity, furnished with sufficient power to comply with every precept, though free to fall from his duty and happiness. To command absolute impossibilities, is tyrannical, and utterly inconsistent with the nature of the blessed God.

(2.) The first man wilfully transgressed the law, and lost his holiness: and nature being poisoned in the fountain, is corrupt in all the descendants from him. Mankind was justly degraded in rebellious Adam, and is destitute of spiritual strength to perform all that the law requires.

(3.) This disability is vicious and culpable, and can be no pretence against the rights of the Lawgiver. A natural disability from the want of requisite faculties is a just excuse. It is no fault that a man cannot stop the sun, as Joshua did; nor calm a tempest, as our Saviour did by his word. But the disability that arises from a depraved disposition, renders a person more guilty.

And this is the present case. The will of man is disobedient and perverse, and as soon as it can exercise election, chooses evil; and by custom in sin becomes more hardened and obstinate. And from hence the prophet charges the contumacious Jews; "Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken." Jer. 6. 10. Were they incapable of hearing the divine commands? No; "but the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, they had no delight in it." And our Saviour upbraids the pharisees, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that comes from God only?" John 5. 44. They were in high reputation for their holiness, which made it impossible for them in a humble penitent manner to submit to our Saviour. In short, the primary end of the law was the happiness of man in the performance of his duty; and his first sin, and consequent impotence to fulfil it, was by his own fault. As the obliquity of a line cannot be ascribed to the straight rule, but to the error of the hand that draws it. And from hence it is clear, that if God should with a terrible exactness require of men unsinning obedience upon the pain of damnation, he could not be taxed with unrighteousness.

2. But God has been pleased to mitigate and allay the severity of the law by the gospel; so that although the least breach of it makes a person an offender and obnoxious to judgment, yet the law of faith propounds such merciful conditions to the guilty, that upon the performance of them, they may plead their pardon sealed with the blood of their Redeemer, and shall be saved and crowned in the day of judgment. We are commanded "so to speak and do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." Jam. 2. 12. Thus the gospel is styled, in that it frees the conscience, though not from the obedience, yet from the terrors and condemnation of the law; for there was not the least signification of mercy by it. But in the gospel, "the grace of God most illustriously appears.

(1.) In that when our innocence was lost, there may be a restoration of the sinner by repentance, to which the plenary pardon of sin is assured: "Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil, and learn to do well, saith the Lord: and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white like wool." Isa. 1, 16, 17, 18. God will

not pardon those who forgive and flatter themselves in their sins; "but those who confess and forsake them, shall find mercy."

(2.) Sincerity of obedience is accepted where perfection is wanting. When a person with consent of heart and serious endeavours strives to obey the holy will of God, without the exception of any known duty, or the indulgence of any sin, "God will spare him, as a father spares his son that serves him." Mal. 3. 17. It is not so much the matter as the allowance that makes sin deadly. Where there is guile in the heart, it will be severely imputed. It is not according to some particular acts of sin, but the tenor of the life, that the state of men will be decided.

(3.) Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus, that is such a belief of the truth and goodness of his promises, as induces us "to receive him as our Prince and Saviour;" as purifies the conscience, the heart and life, will free us from hell, and entitle us to heaven, according to the covenant of grace. In short, the final resolution of a man's trial and case will be this; either he has performed the gracious conditions of the gospel, and he shall "be saved;" or rejected them, and he shall "be damned."

If it be objected, that the terms of evangelical justification, though in themselves comparatively easy, yet are of impossible performance to men in their natural sinful state. The answer is clear:

That although the "natural man be dead in sin," without spiritual strength to resolve and perform his duty, and holy heat of desires to it; and nothing is alive in him but his corrupt passions, that are like worms generated in a carcass; yet by the grace that is offered in the gospel, he may be enabled to perform the conditions of it: for in this the gospel excels the law, the law discovers sin, but affords no degrees of supernatural power to subdue it, and directs to no means for the expiation of its guilt. As "the fire in the bush" discovered the thorns without consuming them. But the sanctifying Spirit, the true spring of "life and power," 2 Tim. 1. 7. is the concomitant of the gospel, as St. Peter declares, "With the preaching of the gospel the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven." 1 Pet. 1. 12. And the Spirit by illuminating, preventing, and exciting grace assists men to repent and believe; and is promised in rich and liberal supplies to all that humbly and ardently pray for it. This our

Saviour assures to us by a most tender and endearing comparison: "if ye that are evil, know how to give good things to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask it?" Luke 11. 13.

From hence it follows, that it is from the perverseness of the will, and the love of sin, that men do not obey the gospel. For the Holy Spirit never withdraws his gracious assistance, till "resisted, grieved, and quenched by them." It will be no excuse, that divine grace is not conferred in the same eminent degree upon some as upon others that are converted: for the impenitent shall not be condemned for want of that singular powerful grace that was the privilege of the elect, but for "receiving in vain" that measure of common grace that they had. If he that received "one talent" had faithfully improved it, he had been rewarded with more; but upon the slothful and ungrateful neglect of his duty, he was justly deprived of it, and cast into a dungeon of horror, the emblem of hell. The sentence of the law has its full force upon impenitent sinners, with intolerable aggravations for neglecting the salvation of the gospel.

Concerning the heathens, the scripture declares,

1st. That although the law published by Moses was not communicated to them, yet there was a silent, though less perfect impression of it in their hearts. The law of nature in the fundamental precepts of religion, and society, and temperance, was better known than obeyed by them. Therefore the apostle indicts them for atrocious crimes, Rom. 1. 26, 27. such as natural conscience, consenting with the law of God, severely forbids upon the pain of damnation. Thus it is said of the heathens, "who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death; not only commit the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Rom. 1. 32. And at the last day, "as many as have sinned without the law, as delivered to the Jews, shall be judged and perish, not according to the law of Moses," Rom. 2. but the law of nature that obliged them to do good, and restrain themselves from evil; of which the counterpart was not totally deleted in their hearts.

2dly. Although the revelation of Christ in his person, office and benefits, is not by the preaching of the gospel (that is necessary for the "begetting of faith") extended to all nations;

yet the grace of the Redeemer is so far universal, that upon his account the indulgent providence of God invited the heathens to repentance. His renewed benefits that sweetened their lives, Rom. 2. 4. and his powerful patience in forbearing so long to cut them off, when their impurities and impieties were so provoking, was a testimony of his inclination to clemency upon their reformation, Acts 14. 17. And for their abusing his favours, and resisting the methods of his goodness, they will be inexcusable to themselves, and their condemnation righteous to their own consciencea.

CHAP. III.

Eternal death is wisely and justly ordained to be the punishment of sin. It is the wisdom of the Lawgiver to appoint such a punishment as might overpoise all temptations to break the law. It is just to make a proportion between the quality of the offence, and the degrees of punishment. Sin is a contempt of God's majesty that is truly infinite. The obligations of reasonable creatures to the Creator, extremely increase the guilt of sin. The meanness of the motives that induce men to sin, aggravates the offence. The despising of eternal life, and the choosing the pleasures of sin, with hell in its retinue, makes the punishment to be justly inflicted on them. The obstinate and incurable lusts of men, justly make them objects of revenging justice for ever.

ii. WE are next to consider the sanction of the law that enforces obedience; and it will appear that God is not extreme, but wisely and justly ordained eternal death to be the punishment of sin.

This will appear by considering,

1. The end of the sanction is to preserve the authority of the law in its full vigour, to render it most solemn and awful; and consequently it is the wisdom of the Lawgiver to ordain a punish-

ment so heavy, as to overpoise all temptations that might otherwise induce the subjects to transgress its precepts.

Therefore to Adam, the first and second death was threatened upon his disobedience; and fear, as a sentinel, was planted in his breast, that no guilty thought, no irregular desire, no deceitful suggestion should enter to break the tables of the law deposited therein. Now since, notwithstanding the threatening, man was so easily seduced by the insinuations of the tempter to break the law, and disorder the government of God in the world, it is evident that such a restraint was not over vigorous to secure his obedience. I shall not insist on what is sadly visible since the first apostacy, that there is in mankind such a prodigious propensity to sensual things, that without the fear of hell, no arguments are strong enough to prevent the bold violation of the divine law.

2. It is consented to by common reason, that there ought to be a proportion between the quality of the offence, and the degrees of the punishment. * Justice takes the scales into its hand before it takes the sword. Now sin against God is of such an immense guilt, that an eternal punishment is but equivalent to it. This will appear by considering,

(1.) The perfections of the Lawgiver who is infinitely above us. One act of sin is rebellion against God, and includes in it the contempt of his majesty, before whom the highest angels "cover their faces" with reverence and adoration, as unworthy to behold his glory; and "cover their feet," as unworthy that he should behold them, Isa. 6. 2, 3. the contradiction of his holiness that is his peculiar glory; the denial of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he were confined to the superior world, Job 22. 14. and busy in regulating the harmonious order of the stars, and did not discern and observe what is done below; the defiance of his eternal power, and "provoking him to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he."

(2.) If we consider the obligations of the reasonable creatures to obey his commands, the guilt of sin rises prodigiously. They were made by his power, with this special character of excellency, according to his image: they were happy in his love: they were endowed with intellectual faculties capable to understand and

* Adsit regula peccatis, quæ pœnas irroget æquas. *Horat.*

consider their obligations to their bountiful Lord. From hence it appears that sin is the most unnatural rebellion against God, and in it there is a concurrence of impiety, ingratitude, perfidiousness, and whatever may enhance a crime to an excess of wickedness.

(3.) The meanness of the motives that induce men to prefer the pleasing their depraved appetites before obedience to his sacred will, extremely aggravates the offence. Of this we have a convincing instance in the first sin committed upon earth. Deceitful curiosity, flattering pride, a secret pleasure of acting according to his will, joined with the low attractives of sense, blinded and transported Adam to eat the mortal fruit, against the express command of God. And ever since, the vanishing shadows of honour, or gain, or pleasure, are the only persuasives to sin. And what can be more provoking, than for a trifle to transgress the law of God, and equally despise his favour and displeasure? Can any punishment less than eternal, expiate such impieties? The rules of human justice may discover to us the equity of the divine justice. It is ordained by the wisest states, that many crimes which may be done in a few minutes, shall be punished with death, and the offender be deprived of his natural life for ever. And is it not most just that treason against the "great and immortal King," should be revenged with everlasting death?

(4.) That which farther clears the divine justice in punishing sin with hell, is this, that God by his infallible promise assures us, that all who sincerely and uniformly obey him, shall be rewarded with heaven for ever: a blessedness most worthy the greatness and love of the eternal God to bestow on his servants: a blessedness that surpasses our most comprehensive thoughts. Now if everlasting glory be despised, what remains but endless misery to be the sinner's portion? The consequence is remediless. If sin with an eternal hell in its retinue be chosen and embraced, is it not equal that the rational creature should inherit his own choice? How just is it that those who are the slaves of the devil, and maintain his party here, should have their recompence with him for ever? That those who "now say to the Almighty, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," should hear the dreadful "depart from me into everlasting fire?" As there will be no vain boasting in heaven, where the

reward is the gift of pure bounty; so there will be no righteous complaint against God in hell, where the punishment is inflicted by powerful justice. He that voluntarily sins, by consequence chooses the punishment due to it.

(5.) The estimation of an offence is taken from the disposition of him that does it. When it is done with pleasure and obstinacy, there is no place for favour. Now final impenitence alone makes sin actually and eternally damning to the sinner. Those that, notwithstanding all gracious means, live continually in rebellion against God; those that impenitently die in their sins; those that desire to live here for ever, that they might enjoy their sweet sins; those that are so hardened and naturalized in their vices, that if they were revived and brought again into this world of temptations, would certainly return to the pleasures of sin; * is it not righteous that their incorrigible obstinacy should be punished for ever? Is it not just that those who would continue under the "dominion of sin," should forfeit all their claim to the divine mercy? For if we consider them as unrepentant and irreclaimable from their wickedness, there are in them the just provocations and true causes of God's final rejection and hatred: and if we consider God as revealed in his word and works, his essential properties, wisdom, purity, justice, necessarily work upon such objects in such a manner. How zealous an indignation did the Son of God express against the obdurate pharisees? "You serpents, you generation of vipers, how should you escape the damnation of hell?" Mat. 23. 33. They in despite of all his miracles, the equal expressions of his goodness and power, resisted his authority, blasphemed his person, and slighted his salvation. Now though other sins are of an inferior nature, and weaker evidence, yet obstinacy added to them, makes a person unworthy and incapable of mercy. From hence the misery of the damned is without redemption, without hope, without allay for ever.

* Poenae aequalitas non nude spectanda ut in ponderibus & mensuris, sed expenso proposito, & voto ejus qui deliquit. *Grot.*

CHAP. IV.

The evidence of facts produced as the reason of judgment. All sins, whether secret or openly visible, shall be brought to judgment. Sins of omission and commission. All the aggravations and circumstances of sin. The manner of this judicial proceeding is by opening the books. The books of the law and gospel shall be unfolded in all their precepts, and men's lives compared with them. The omniscience of God will give convincing evidence of men's works. The book of conscience shall be opened, and accuse or excuse men. Satan will be a principal accuser. The wicked will accuse one another. The saints of God will give testimony against the wicked. The impartiality of the sentence will make the divine justice conspicuous. There will be no distinction of persons in that judgment. There will be a distinction of causes. Every man shall be judged according to the tenour of his good works, and the desert of his bad. The harvest shall be answerable to the sowing of the seed, both in kind and measure.

II. I Shall now proceed to consider the evidence of the facts that is produced as the reason of that judgment.

The temper of divine justice is very observable in the particular judgments recorded in scripture. In the first process of justice on earth, we read that God made the inquiry of Adam, "hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" Gen. 3. 11. and by palpable evidence convinced him before he condemned him. Thus before the fiery vengeance upon the wicked cities, the memory of which will never be extinguished, the Lord said to Abraham, "because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done according to the cry of it that is come up unto me," Gen. 18. 20, 21. viz. whether they were so numerously and excessively wicked; "if not, I will know." God is pleased to incarnate himself in man's expression, to declare more sensibly to us, that he never punishes with precipitation, but after an equal trial of the cause. Thus we read of that profane king of Babylon, Belshazzar, "that he was weighed in the balance, and found wanting," Dan. 5. 27. before he was sentenced to be deprived of his

kingdom and life. And the destruction of the antichristian state is attended with solemn hallelujahs for the righteousness of that judgment, Rev. 19. 2, 3. And in the last day the righteousness of God's proceedings shall be universally manifest and magnified. It is therefore called "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Rom. 2. 5. Now in order to this, the scripture informs us, that all the works of men shall be brought into judgment, "even every secret thing, whether good or evil." Eccles. 12. ult. And the apostle saith, "that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5. 10.

All sins, whether secret or open and visible, shall be accounted for. Those sins that have been acted in the most secret retirement, so that no eye of man could take cognizance of them; sins concealed from the eye of the day, the light of the sun, and from the eye of night, the light of a candle, shall then be made manifest. Nay, the sins of the thoughts and affections, of which satan could not accuse men, when the inward fire of lust or malice is not discovered by the least smoke or sparkles, by no expressions, all those shall be brought to judgment: "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Rom. 2. 16.

The sins of omission of our duty that are so numerous, from carelessness and diversions, from slothfulness and delays, and that now so little affect us; for we are more sensible of what we do, than of what we have not done; the guilt of all these shall then be heavily charged on the conscience of the sinner. "I was an hungry, and you gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink," was the accusation of the reprobates from the Judge himself. "To him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is a sin." James 4. The neglect of improving all the means, advantages, and opportunities of doing or receiving good, will be a great part of that judgment. The Lord called his servants to an account for the talents committed to their trust, and required profit in proportion to their number and worth.

All sins of commission in youth and age, whether "gross sensuality, as lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, and all excess of riot, shall be accounted for to him who is ready to judge the quick and the

dead," 1 Pet. 4. 5. or acts of unrighteousness to others. "He that doeth wrong, shall receive according to the wrong he has done." Col. 3. 25. And sins of a lesser guilt, for which the most are not touched with grief or shame, shall then be produced in judgment. All the sins of our words, so easily committed, and not so easily observed, shall then be called to a heavy remembrance. The Judge himself tells us; "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. 12. And if vain words, the signs and immediate effects of a vain mind, shall sadly increase our accounts, how much more all the contentious, fierce and revengeful words; the detracting, false, contumelious and injurious words; the impure, filthy and contagious words; the profane, blasphemous and impious words, that "flow from the evil treasure of the heart?" O their dreadful number and oppressing weight!

And all the aggravations and circumstances of men's sins, that raise their guilt to such fearful heights, shall be enumerated in order to judgment. For thus it was foretold; "behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed; and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 14, 15. And all the good works of the saints shall then be remembered, even to the least work of piety, the "giving of two mites to the treasury of the temple," Luke 21. 3, 4. and the least works of charity, the "giving a cup of cold water to a disciple," Matt. 10. 42. upon the account of his relation to Christ. All their secret graces and duties shall then be rewarded.

The manner of this judicial evidence is set forth to us in scripture, by the "opening the books;" congruously to proceedings in human judgment, wherein the information and charge is produced from writings for the conviction of the accused. Thus it was represented to St. John in a vision; "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of the things that were written in the books, according to their works." Rev. 20. 12.

1. The books of the law and gospel shall then be opened in all the injunctions and prohibitions, and our lives compared with

them. Our Saviour told the Jews, "do not think that I will accuse you to my Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust: not the person, but the law of Moses." John 5. 45. And he denounced against those that reject the gospel; "the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge them in the last day." John 12. 48. The law is the exact transcript of God's sacred will, the natural and immutable rule of righteousness; it is pure, forbids all sin, and enjoins universal holiness; it is spiritual, requires not only a conformity in words and actions, but inward sanctity in mind and heart: for the soul is the principal part of man, entirely open to God's eye, the maker and judge of it. And the most enlightened saints have but an imperfect knowledge of it here. This made holy David, after his meditation upon its purity and perfection, to cry out in an agony, "who can understand his errors! cleanse thou me from secret sins." Psal. 19. This, when opened in its spiritual and comprehensive nature, by a wise and zealous preacher, darts a light into the conscience, and discovers many secret sins, that like so many serpents were still and quiet in the dark; but upon the sudden breaking in of the light, fly upon the sinner, and torment him with their mortal stings. But when the Lawgiver himself shall expound the law in its full extent and perfection, with respect to all the duties it commands, and sins it forbids, how guilty will men appear? how unable to answer one article of a thousand charged upon them?

2. The omniscience of God will give most convincing evidence of all our works: "all things are naked and open to his eyes, with whom we have to do in judgment." Heb. 4. 13. The psalmist declares the infinite perspicacity of his sight: "the darkness hides not from thee, but the night shines as the day." Psal. 139. As his light and transcendent brightness is invisible to us, 1 Tim. 6. 16. so our thickest darkness is visible to him. We cannot see things in the night, because it hinders the reception of the rays, that insinuate into the eyes, and cause sight: but the eyes of our Judge are like a "flame of fire," Rev. 1. 14. dispelling all darkness. From his throne in heaven, his piercing eye sees through all the concealments of men's sins. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." Psal. 90. 8. He discovered the sacrilege of Achan, the lie of Gehazi, the deceit of Ananias. Saul's dis-

obedience in sparing the Amalekites devoted to destruction, I Sam. 15. 21. had the colourable pretence of piety, and, as a sacrifice, was laid on the altar. And David's murder of Uriah was imputed to the chance of war as a sufficient excuse, 2 Sam. 11. 25. But though they might have deceived others, they could not deceive God. He is intimately present with the souls of men, that are unsearchable to the most discerning angels of light, and knows all their most secret designs and desires, the deepest seeds of their actions. He alone has exact scales to "weigh the spirits of men," all the principles, aims and affections that are inseparable from their works. The pharisees, in whom pride was the first property, and hypocrisy a second nature, could not with all their saintly shows impose on our Saviour; "for he knew what was in man," Matt. 23. 14. He discovered their alms to be not the effect of charity but ostentation, Matt. 6. 2. and their specious acts of devotion to be a train to surprise some rich prey, Matt. 23. 14.

And this divine knowledge of men and their actions, is in order to judgment. Thus the wise king declares, "doth not he that ponders the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" Prov. 24. 12. And God himself testifies, "I the Lord search the heart, even to give to every man according to his works." Jer. 17. 10. For this reason he is said to keep a register of men's sins. Thus he speaks of the impure idolatries of the Jews; "behold, it is written before me," Isa. 65. 6. to signify his exact and actual knowledge, "I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosoms." And at the day of judgment he will declare his knowledge of their sins before all, and the most secret shall be made evident, as if written in their foreheads in the most plain and legible characters.

And all the goodness of the saints shall then be revealed by the Judge. * Their greatest excellencies are invisible to the eyes of men: the sanctity of their aims and affections, which gives life and value to all the acts of obedience; their secret duties, wherein the sincerity and ardency of their souls is most expres-

* O si nobis animam boni viri liceret inspicere, quam pulchram faciem, quam sanctam, quam ex magnifico, placidoque fulgentem videremus! *Senec.*

sed, are only known to God. And such is the excellent humility of the saints, that the more they are enriched, and abound with the gracious influences of the Spirit, the less they discover to the world; as the celestial bodies, when in nearest conjunction with the sun, and most filled with his light, are least in appearance to the inhabitants of the earth. But there is a "book of remembrance before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels: and I will spare them as a man spares his son that serves him." Mal. 3. 16, 17.

3. The conscience of every man shall then be opened, and "give an accusing or excusing testimony of all things;" Rom. 2. 15, 16. for these acts of conscience in the present life, have a final respect to God's tribunal. And though the accounts are so vast, there shall be an exact agreement between the books of God's omniscience and of conscience in the "day of judgment." Now indeed the conscience of man, though never so inquisitive and diligent in examining and revising his ways, is unable to take a just account of his sins. As one that would tell the first appearing stars in the evening, before he can reckon them, others appear and confound his memory with their number: so when conscience is seriously intent in reflecting upon itself, before it can reckon up the sins committed against one command, innumerable others appear. This made the psalmist, upon the survey of his actions, break forth in amazement and perplexity; "Mine iniquities are more than the hairs upon my head, therefore my heart fails me." Psal. 40. 12. But it will be one of the miracles of that day, to enlarge the view of conscience to all their sins. Now the records of conscience are often obliterated, and the sins written therein are forgotten; but then they shall appear in so clear an impression, that the wicked shall be inexcusable to themselves, and conscience subscribes their condemnation. And O the formidable spectacle, when conscience enlightened by a beam from heaven, shall present to a sinner in one view the sins of his whole life! Now conscience is a notary in every man's bosom; and though it is not always vocal, yet writes down their actions. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with a point of a diamond it is graven upon the tables of the heart." Jer. 17. 1. But then it shall be compelled to give a

full charge against the guilty. Of this we have an infallible presage in this world, when conscience turns the point against the breast of a sinner, and enforces the tongue, by a secret instigation, to accuse the person. And this information of conscience at the last will make the sinner speechless: for the book of accounts with divine justice, was always in his own keeping; and whatever is recorded there, was written with his own hand. And how will those hardened sinners that now kick against the pricks of conscience, be able to repel its strong and quick accusations before that terrible tribunal?

4. Other numerous witnesses will appear to finish the process of that day. Not as if God that knows all things, wants information, but for the public conviction of the wicked.

Satan will then bring in a bloody charge against them. Such is his malignity, that he is a complainer of God to man, and by calumniating the blessed Creator, seduced our first parents; and he is the accuser of men to God. He is styled the "accuser of the brethren before God day and night." Rev. Sometimes falsely, as when he taxed Job, that his piety was mercenary; and often truly, to provoke the divine displeasure. But though his charge be just against them as sinners, yet as penitent sinners they are absolved by the Judge upon the throne of grace. This we have represented to the prophet Zechary, "Joshua the high priest, a type of the church, standing before the angel of the Lord, and satan standing at his right hand to accuse him;" Zech. 3. 1, 2, 3. for that was the place of accusers. But Christ the blessed reconciler interposed: "And the Lord said to satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee." But he will principally act the part of an accuser at the last judgment. This is intimated in that fearful imprecation, "Let satan stand at his right hand: when he is judged, let him be condemned." Psal. 109. 6, 7. He is now an active watchful spirit, whose diligence is equal to his malice, and by glittering snares, or violent temptations, draws men to sin. But then he will be their most bitter accuser, not from zeal of justice, but pure malignity. Then he will aggravate their crimes by the most killing circumstances, though in accusing them he indites himself, their sins being usually done by his solicitations.

And the wicked themselves will accuse one another. In this

world fellow-sinners usually conceal one another's wickedness, restrained by their own obnoxiousness. But then all that have been jointly engaged in the commission of sin, will impeach each other. The voluptuous sinners that have excited one another to lust or luxury; "Come let us take our fill of love till the morning." Prov. 7. 18. "Come I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; for to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant." Isa. 56. 12. All the charming companions and associates will with fierceness charge one another. And the malicious cruel sinners that say, "Come let us lay wait for blood, let us swallow them up quick as the grave," Prov. 1. will then, like enraged furies, fly upon one another. In all sins of combination, the inferior instruments will accuse their directors for their pernicious counsel, and the directors will accuse the instruments for their wicked compliance.

And all the holy servants of God, who by their instructions, counsels, admonitions, examples, have endeavoured to make the world better; especially those who by their place and relation were more concerned, and more zealously and compassionately urged and persuaded those under their care to reform their lives, and save their souls, will give a heavy testimony against them. Indeed the very presence of the saints will upbraid the wicked, for their resisting all the warning, melting entreaties, all the grave and serious reproofs, all the tender earnest expostulations, that were ineffectual by the hardness of their hearts.

Briefly, the scripture attributes to the signs and circumstances of men's sins, a vocal evidence against them. Thus the prophet speaking of the house built by rapine and extortion, "The stones of the wall cry, and the beams answer them," Hab. 2. 11. and with concurrent testimony accuse the unrighteous builder. And St. James declares, that "the wages of the hireling, kept back by fraud, cry against the oppressor. And the rust of gold and silver treasured up, is a witness against the covetous." Jam. 5. 3, 4. And this by the recognition of conscience will be a memorial against them hereafter.

To what the scripture speaks of this kind of evidence of men's sins, I shall add a useful representation framed by a heathen, to signify that wickedness, how secretly soever committed, shall be brought to light in judgment. He tells us, "That the soul of a very guilty wretch was after death arraigned before one of the

severe judges below. And at his trial, because his atrocious crimes were done in secret, he stood upon his defence, denying all. The judge commanded his lamp to be produced, that was an eye witness of his wickedness. The lamp appeared, and being demanded what it knew of him? answered with a sigh, would I had been conscious of nothing, for even now the remembrance of his villanies makes me to tremble: I wish my light had been extinguished, that the oil that maintained it had quenched it. But I burnt with disdain, and cast about some sparks to fire his impure bed; and was grieved that my little flame was so weak as not to consume it. I said within myself, if the sun saw these villanies, it would be eclipsed, and leave the world in darkness. But I now perceive why I was constrained to give light to him, that being a secret spy of his uncleanness, his thefts and cruelties, I might reveal them." But we that are enlightened by faith, and know that God is omnipresent, and that whatever sin is done, though in the deepest and darkest recess, is manifest to him, * have no need of Lucian's lamp to make our judge to be feared by us. The impartiality of the sentence will make the justice of God conspicuous before the whole world. This consists in two things. 1. There will be no distinction of persons. 2. There will be a distinction of causes in that judgment; and according to their nature, the sentence will pass upon all.

1. There will be no distinction of persons. In human courts the judges sometimes extend and amplify, sometimes contract or smother the evidence, and are more rigorous or favourable in their sentence, as they are biassed towards the persons before them. But the Righteous Judge of the world is incapable of being inclined to favour or severity upon such base motives. This is frequently declared in scripture, to possess us with his fear. "If ye call upon the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." 1 Pet. 1. 17. No spiritual privileges upon which men are so apt to presume, viz. that they are members of the reformed church, that they are enriched with excellent gifts, that they enjoy the ordinances in their purest adminis-

* Ipse timendus est in publico, ipse in secreto. Lucerna ardet? videt te. Lucerna extincta est? videt te. In cubile intras? videt te. In corde versaris? videt te. Ipsum time.

tration, will avail them without real holiness in their hearts and lives. The being united to societies of the most glorious profession, of strictest purity, and sublime devotion, does no more prove one to be a real saint, than the being of an eminent company of merchants proves one to be a rich citizen. "Those that bow the knee and not the heart in faithful reverence, that give the empty title of Lord to Christ, without the tribute of obedience, will be rejected by him. Many shall say at the day of judgment, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and done many wonderous works." Mat. 7. 22. "Then will the Judge say, I know you not; depart from me ye workers of iniquity." No degrees of civil greatness will be of any moment and advantage in that day. Saint John testifies, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God," in an equal line, to receive their trial. Kings shall then be divested of their imperial titles, of their crowns and sceptres, and their robes of state, and only be accompanied with their works. Of this we have an undoubted proof, in that they are no more exempted from the common law of dying than the meanest slave. Death, that rugged officer, arrests them without ceremony, and summons them to appear before that tribunal. The royal purple could not protect Herod from being devoured by worms. The apostle speaks indefinitely in the foreeited place; "He that does wrong, shall receive for the wrong he has done; and there is no respect of persons." Col. 3. ult. No circumstantial accidents can derive pure worth, or truly debase persons, but inherent qualities, and actions that flow from them: and accordingly, "the high and holy God" will accept or disapprove them. What St. Paul observes of the saving grace of the gospel being indifferently offered to all, is applicable in this case. He tells us, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian nor Scythian, Bond nor Free," Col. 3. 11. are preferred or excluded upon a carnal account, but that all may equally partake of the spiritual blessings. Thus the difference of nations will be no privilege or prejudice to any in the day of judgment. The most rude and contemptible shall have as fair and equal a trial, as the most polite and civilized: the ignorant Barbarians as the learned Grecians, that so much boasted of their vain excellencies above them: the negroes in Africa as the people of Europe; for they have the same relation to God their Maker, and as truly bear the impression of God stamped upon the hu-

man nature in the creation, and therefore common to the whole species of mankind. An image may be fashioned in ebony as well as in ivory. Briefly, all men are equally subject to his laws, and shall be equally accountable for their actions. "The rich and the poor shall then meet together, without distinction, before God the Maker and Judge of them all."

2. There shall be a distinction of causes, and every man be judged "according to his works," the tenor of good works, and the desert of bad. The apostle assures us, "That whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap: he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. 6. 7, 8. The harvest shall be according to the seed both in kind and measure.

"Those who by patient continuance in welldoing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, shall obtain eternal life." Rom. 2. 7. Indeed, "eternal life is the gift of infinite bounty," Rom. 6. ult. nay of "pure mercy," Jude 21. and mercy excludes merit. It is said of the blessed martyrs, who contended for the truth and purity of the gospel to the death, that "their robes were washed white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. 7. 14. not in their own blood. Their right to heaven was from the application of his merits to them. But the reward is dispensed from God according to the evangelical law; not only as a magnificent prince, but as "a Righteous Judge." All those to whom the gospel promises eternal life, shall infallibly obtain it, and none that the gospel excludes. Those who were sensible of their sins, and cordially forsaking them, did humbly and entirely depend upon the grace of God, through the blessed reconciler and Saviour, shall be justified and glorified. Then the Judge will discern between unfeigned faith and vain presumption, and will justify the faith of the saints by the genuine fruits of it, "the godliness, righteousness, and sobriety of their lives," and a victorious perseverance in their duty, notwithstanding all the pleasing temptations or tortures to withdraw them from it. Thus the apostle expresses his humble confidence; "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the Righteous Judge will give me at that day, and not only to me, but to all that love his appearance." 2 Tim. 4. 5, 8. We read

in the description of the last judgment, that "the book of life was opened: the names of all that were written in heaven," Rev. 20. 12. shall then be declared, that it may appear they are "saved by grace." For it was his most free pleasure to select some from the common mass of perdition, who were naturally as guilty and corrupted as others, and to predestinate them to eternal glory, and effectual persevering grace to prepare them for it. "The saints are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that they should walk in them." And the new creation is as undeserved and entire an effect of God's love as the first was. But it is said, "That every man was judged according to his works." For eternal election does not entitle a person immediately to heaven, but according to the order established in the gospel. Thus the King at the last day speaks to the elect; "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye fed me; naked, and ye clothed me." Mat. 25. 34, 35.

And according as the saints have excelled in fidelity and zeal in God's service, they shall be rewarded with a more excellent glory. The stars of the supreme heaven are of a different brightness and greatness, as the stars of the visible firmament. Indeed all are perfectly happy, without * jealousy that any is equal or superior to them in that kingdom. But God will crown his own graces as the saints have improved them. Our Saviour valued the widow's two mites, as transcending all the magnificent gifts of others, because of the degrees of love in the giver. There was a richer mine of affection in her heart, gold of a more noble vein, more pure and precious than all their riches. This was of greater price in God's account, who weighs the spirits in his balance. God "will accept and reward according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not." 2 Cor. 8. 12. He that improves but two talents with his best skill and diligence, shall have a greater reward than another that had ten talents, and was remiss and less careful to employ them for his master's profit. The rule will be exactly observed, "He that

* Plus amant illud regnum in quo non timent habere consortes. *Aug. de Civit. Dei.*

sows bountifully, shall reap bountifully; and he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly."

And if God will be thus impartial in rewarding the saints, much more in punishing the wicked. For the remuneration of our duty is the effect of his most free favour; but the recompences of sin are due, and decreed by justice, in number, weight, and measure. The severity of the sentence will be in proportion, as men's sins have been more numerous and heinous. Although all the damned shall be equally miserable in despair, all broken on an endless wheel, yet the degrees of their torment are different. Sins of ignorance are extenuated in comparison of rebellious sins against knowledge. The first are like a servant's dashing against his master in the dark, the other like the insolent striking him in the light: and as they incur great guilt, will expose to great punishment. Accordingly our Saviour predicts, "That the servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Luke 12. 47, 48. Inactive knowledge is worse than ignorance. For this reason the case of heathens will be more tolerable than that of the Jews: for though some natural principles were strong and quick in their minds, that made them sensible of their duty and danger, yet they were not so clear and perfect as the law delivered by Moses. Those sins that were infirmities in a pagan, were presumptuous in a Jew. And the case of the Jews will be more tolerable than of disobedient christians, who enjoy the gospel less charged with ceremonies, and more abundant in grace than the Mosaical dispensation. Those that have set before them the life of Christ, the model of all perfection, that are excited by such loud calls "to flee from the wrath to come," and yet are deaf and regardless to the commands, nay to the melting invitations and precious promises of the gospel, shall have a more intolerable judgment than the most guilty sinners, even the Sodomites and Sidonians that were strangers to it. The precious blood of the Son of God despised, induces a crimson guilt. And as sins are committed with pride and pleasure, with eager appetite and obstinacy, the revenge of justice will be more heavy upon persons.

More particularly, sins of consequence, whereby others are drawn to sin, will heighten the guilt, and the retribution of justice will be to every man "according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jer. 17. 10.

This will principally concern superiors in eminency of place, whose dignity has always a concomitant proportion of duty. Their vicious actions are examples, and their examples more powerful rules than their laws, and give countenance to others to sin licentiously. They "sin with a high hand," and involve the ruin of innumerable persons that depend upon them: as the dragon in the revelation, whose fall from heaven drew a train of lesser stars with him. And all inferior magistrates, who by personal commission, or partial connivance, encourage and harden others in sin, and by their power discountenance serious religion, and obstruct the progress of it, heap up damnation to themselves.

And the ministers of the word, who are obliged to "watch for the souls of men;" and should, like the heavens, by their light, influence and motion, their doctrine and lives, guide and quicken others in the ways of holiness; if by their neglect and wickedness others are lost for ever, their account will be most heavy and undoing.

Of this number are those, who by their unholy conversation weaken the authority and efficacy of the word, and more successfully persuade men to do evil, than by their preaching to do well: for we are apt to take deeper impression through the eye than through the ear, and to follow the physician's practice rather than his counsel. These "perish not alone in their iniquity." And such who are unfaithful dispensers of the treasures of their Lord, and by loose doctrines corrupt the minds of men, to fancy a mercy in God derogatory to his holiness, that although they live indulgently in sin, they may obtain an easy pardon and happiness at last: and such who employ their high commission for low and base ends: those who instead of "preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified," the pure and saving truths derived from the fountain of the gospel, entertain their hearers with flashy conceits, and studied vanities, to give a relish to curiosity, and to have the applause of fools, and obscure the native majesty of the word, enervate its force, and render it powerless to conscience.

And those who spend their zeal in things of no moment to salvation, and let fly bitter invectives against those that dissent from them in unconcerning matters, by which they harden atheistical scorners in vilifying the office of the ministry as a carnal invention, set up and used for secular ends; and induce others to place religion in formalities, and slight colours of it, as if conformity to needless rites would exclude the defects of substantial holiness.

It is observed in the Chaldee paraphrase, when God was inquiring of Cain concerning Abel, that he charges him, "The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me:" as if Cain were a murderer, not of a single man only, but of a numerous race that might have descended from his brother. Thus a wicked minister will be charged, not only for murdering himself, but as many precious souls as might have been converted and saved, if he had faithfully performed his duty.

And parents that should instil the principles of godliness into their children in their early age, and season their minds with the knowledge of the divine laws, to regulate their lives, and make them sensible of their obligations to obey them; that should recommend religion to their affections by an holy and heavenly conversation, if by the neglect of their duty their children are exposed as a prey to the tempter, and ruined for ever, it will enhance their last reckoning, and increase the score of their guilts beyond expression.

And masters of families, and all others that have authority and advantage to preserve or reform from evil those that are committed to their care, and to instruct and command them to do what is pleasing to God, and profitable to their souls, will be sadly accountable for those that perish by their neglect.

In short, we see by common experience, that company and mutual consent is a usual motive to sin; and many persons that alone would with abhorrence reject some temptations, yet are sociably sinful. Now all those who by excitation or example, lead others to destruction, as they are first in sin, will be chief in punishment. We read in the parable of the rich voluptuary, Luke 16. 28. that being in hell, he desired a messenger might be dispatched from the dead to warn his brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. Is there such charity in

hell to the souls of others? * No, that furnace always burns with its proper flames, there is not a spark of that divine fire there: but remembering how guilty he had been of their sins, feared that his torments would be increased by their coming thither. Society in endless sorrows does not divide, but reflect them.

Now if damnation for sin be such a misery as is expressed in the scripture by the most violent figures, and words of the heaviest signification; if all the possible tortures suffered here are but a lenitive to the preparations of wrath in hell; how miserable shall those be, who, as if a single damnation were a light matter, do not only commit sin in their own persons, but are in combination with satan to corrupt and destroy others, and multiply damnation against themselves? These "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath."

Briefly; The whole process of that day, the arraignment and sentence will be so ordered, the righteousness and reasonableness of the proceedings will be so manifest, as to clear the Judge, and confound the guilty. "God will be justified in his sentence, and overcome when he judgeth."

* Non orat pro fratrum salute qua non tangitur reprobus, sed pro se ne ipsius tormenta ex consortio fratrum augeantur. *Brugen.*

CHAP. V.

An excitation to confirm our faith of the eternal judgment. Reason sees the necessity of a future judgment. Divine revelation expressly declares it. Considerations requisite to make faith effectual. The belief of a future judgment clears the honour of God's governing the world, from the imputation of unrighteousness, with respect to the prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the saints. It is a powerful support to the saints in their persecutions. The belief of this is effectual to restrain from secret sins. It is a powerful remedy against the pernicious pleasures of sin. The consideration that the Son of God clothed with our nature shall judge the world, affords great consolation to his people, and is a motive of great terror to the wicked.

III. I Now come to the application of this great doctrine.

1. Let us from what has been discoursed of judgment to come, be excited to confirm our faith in this great and useful doctrine; and by serious and frequent thoughts to apply it to ourselves. Some within the church have only a superficial belief of this, as a point of the religion wherein they were educated; but carnal affections, fear, hope, love, and desire, control their assent as to its operation upon them. They believe in the general that God is the Judge and rewarder of our actions, and in the absence of temptation resolve to obey him: but when a strong trial comes from some temporal good or evil that is present, their faith is negligent and inactive to keep them from sin. Now to make our faith powerful, we must,

(I.) Confirm it by convincing arguments, that it may be an undoubted assurance, a certain light, directive and persuasive in the course of our lives. Some doctrines of religion that are of an incomprehensible nature, and should be received with silent adoration for the authority of the revealer, are obstinately contradicted by some, upon a vain pretence that nothing is to be believed that will not endure the rigorous inquisition of reason, and be comprehended by our narrow minds: but reason, though darkened, sees the necessity of a future judgment. Nature and scripture testify there is a God, and that he has a right, and power, and will to distribute the rewards of virtue, and the pe-

nalties of vice to his subjects. To deny this, is directly against the implanted notion of the Deity in the heart of man. There is a real difference between moral good and evil, not depending upon opinion, but arising from the immutable nature of things, and the eternal law of God. Otherwise considered in itself, it were no more faulty to murder a parent, than to kill a fly; nor to rob a traveller, than to chase a deer. But the conscience of the most profligate wretch would startle at such an assertion. The disposition and admirable order of the world in its various parts, and the vicissitude of seasons, declare to the observing mind, that a most wise, good and powerful God governs and preserves all things by his vigorous influence. And can it be that the divine providence, so visibly wise and good in regulating the course of nature, should be defective towards man, the most noble part of the world? And can it be extended to human affairs, if there be no other than the present state, wherein the righteous are afflicted, and the wicked prosper? where sins of the deepest stain and the loudest cry are unpunished; and the sublime and truly heroic virtues are unrewarded? nay, where vice receives the natural reward of virtue, honour and felicity; and virtue the just wages of vice, disgrace and sufferings? It is necessary therefore that there be a future state, and a righteous distribution of rewards, according to the good and evil of men's actions here.

The heathens disguised this terrible truth under the fictions of the infernal judges, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, and Eacus. And the furies and vultures, and fiery lake, which they thought tormented the wicked in the next world, * discover what apprehensions they had of the desert of sin, and the punishment that certainly attended it. The guilty would fain be freed from the terrors of it, and strangle conscience, that is bound over to give testimony in the day of judgment, that they may sin without scruples. But though fear be a troublesome and involuntary passion, they cannot totally extinguish the internal sense and presages of future judgment: but as the motions of courage came upon Samson at times; so conscience awakened by sharp afflictions, by sudden dangers, and the approaches of death, makes a sad deduction of past sins, and forecasts cruel things:

* Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ. *Tert.*

it cites the offender before the enlightened tribunal of heaven, scourges with remorse, and makes him feel even here the strokes of hell. Though the sin be secret, and the guilty person powerful, not within the cognizance or reach of human justice, yet conscience has a rack within, and causes pain and anxiety, by fearful expectations of judgment to come.

And divine revelation is most express in declaring this great truth. The light of faith is more clear and certain from the infallible word of God, than the light of reason. Before the flood, Enoch in the early age of the world foretold it; "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Jude 14, 15. Solomon under the law repeats this doctrine, that "every secret thing shall be brought into judgment, whether good or evil." Eccl. 12. And God himself speaks in the sublimest style of majesty, and swears by himself, for our firmer belief, "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God," Isa. 45. 2, 3. the glory of his justice. From whence the apostle infers, "So then every one of us shall give an account to God for himself." Rom. 14. 10, 11. In the gospel we have distinctly described the person of the Judge, the glorious attendants of his coming, and the manner of his proceedings in that day, Mat. 13. 42, 43. & 24. 30, 31. Now the many predictions in scripture, so visibly accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ, and by him, give infallible assurance, that all his promises and threatenings are equally certain, and shall be fulfilled. * As sure as our Saviour is come in his humble state, and has accomplished the prophecies of his sufferings, he will come in his glory to judge the world.

(2.) That the belief of eternal judgment may be powerful in our hearts and lives, it must be acturated by frequent and serious thoughts. Faith gives life and efficacy to our notions of eternal things, and consideration makes our faith effectual. As the natural life is preserved by the activity of the vital principles, the circulation of the blood, the drawing of the breath, the motion of the pulse; so the spiritual life is maintained by the exercise of grace. The carnal affections dare not appear before reason and conscience, when awakened by the serious believing consideration

* An vere extribuit nobis omnia quæ promisit, & de solo die judicii nos fefellit? *Aug.*

of eternal judgment. The evangelists relate, that when our Saviour was asleep in the ship, a sudden tempest arose that was likely to over-set it in the sea: but awakened by the cry of his disciples, "Lord, save us, we perish; he presently rebuked the wind, and a calm ensued." Thus whilst the habit of faith is asleep in the soul, there will be great danger from the concurrent violence of temptations and corruptions; but when it is awakened by lively and powerful thoughts, it does miracles in subduing the strongest lusts. It is monstrous and beyond all belief, did not sensible experience make it evident, that notwithstanding the minds of men are convinced of the certainty of the divine judgment, and the recompences that immediately follow, yet their wills remain unconverted, and their affections cold and inactive in their preparations for it: that such numbers who have so much christianity as to believe that an irrevocable doom will pass upon the wicked, and so little christianity, that they cannot justly hope to escape from it, yet are so careless of their duty, nay joyful in their sinful courses, as if judgment were a dreadless thing. What is the cause of this prodigious security? It is the neglect of considering that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or evil."

The next cause of this stupidity is, that they put "the evil day" at a remote distance: as the scorners said, "The vision is for many days:" they study to be secure, and delay their preparations, presuming to have time enough before them. Their senses and faculties are so employed abroad in the world, that they have neither leisure nor desire to think seriously of it. Their hearts are so ravished with dreams of sensuality, and engaged in terrene affairs, that they are very averse from exercising their minds upon such displeasing objects.

Vain men! how willingly do they deceive themselves? The Judge himself declares, "Behold, I come quickly: his throne is like a fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire;" an emblem of his swift coming to judgment. Can they be assured of life one hour? The day of death is equivalent to the day of judgment: for immediately after there is a final decision of men's states for ever.

I have read of an excellent preacher, that in a sermon described the last judgment in all its terrors, with such ardent expres-

sions, and those animated with such an affecting voice, such an inflamed countenance and action, that his hearers broke forth into passionate cries, as if the Judge himself had been present to pass the final sentence upon them. In the height of their commotion, the preacher bid them stop their tears and passions, for he had one thing more to add, the most afflicting and astonishing consideration of all the rest, that within less than a quarter of an hour, the memory and regard of that which so transported them would vanish, and their affections return to carnal objects in their usual manner.

The neglect of consideration makes even the doctrine of judgment to come to be without efficacy. It is necessary therefore that the belief of this be so firmly seated in the heart as its throne, that it may command the thoughts to be very attentive to it, and may have regal power over our wills and affections, that our lives may be ordered according to its rules.

2. The consideration of eternal judgment will vindicate the proceedings of divine providence, and the honour of God's governing this world, from the imputation of unrighteousness. God is provoked every day, yet spares the wicked, and heaps an abundance of favours on them. His patience and goodness they profanely abuse, and become more obdurate and inflexible. They are apt to blaspheme the excellency of his nature in their hearts, Psal. 14. 1. thinking that he is ignorant or careless, impotent or unjust. They implicitly deny his providence and judgment, that he does not observe their sins, and will not require an account for them: or else they interpret his permission to be an approbation of their sins. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest I was such an one as thyself." Psal. 50. Thus the heathens transplanted the vices of earth to heaven, and represented their gods to be sensual, jealous, furious as men, and accordingly expect an easy absolution for their sins. Or else the distance of judgment to come so hardens them, that they hear God's thunder with less fear, than boys do their squibs and crackers. "Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." Eccles. 8. 2. But how desperate is the madness of sinners? God now "seems to wink at their sins," Acts 17. 30. but hath appointed a day of accounts. He suffers them to live in prosperity, "but they are reserved to the

day of judgment to be punished," 2 Pet. 2. 4. and possibly sooner: for sometimes they are cut off by visible vengeance, to convince the world that the Supreme Judge does not "bear the sword in vain." But though it is delayed for a time, yet he declares, that "their sins are laid up in store with him, and sealed up among his treasures. To him belongs vengeance and recompence." Deut. 32. 34. He is a mild Judge now, and his clemency suspends their punishment; but justice will not forget it, Amos 8. 7. He threatens the secure sinner, "I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes." Psal. 50. 21. How will the scornful obstinate sinner change complexion, and tremble, when an army of sins more terrible than so many furies shall be ranged in battle, and with fiery darts wound his naked soul? How will the stubborn atheist, that pleases himself with vain imaginations of the eternity of the world, and the mortality of the soul, be confounded when he feels the truth of scripture threatenings to his eternal sorrow? then all their railleries will be turned into lamentations. It is not for * want of power that God spares the wicked, but because they are always in his hands, and he can make them as miserable as they are sinful when he pleases. It is not through the neglect of justice, but for most wise and holy reasons, as shall appear in the last day, when a decisive irreversible judgment shall be pronounced, and immediately inflicted upon them before the world. When an † actor at Athens spoke with admiration of riches, as the most valuable acquisition, and of the felicity of rich men; the people were in an uproar at the immorality of the speech, and were ready to chase him from the stage. But the poet himself appeared, and desired them to stop their fury till they saw the catastrophe, ‡ the wretched end of that sordid miser. Thus we are apt to accuse the ways of God when the wicked flourish; but we should stop our tumultuous thoughts, for their end will absolve divine provi-

* Cum habeat in potestate vindictam, mavult diu tenere patientiam. *Cyprian. de bon. Patient.*

† Ὦ χρυσὸς δεῖγμα κάλλιγον βροτοῖς, &c.

‡ Cum hi novissimi versus in Tragœdia Euripidis pronuntiati essent, totus populus ad ejiciendum & actorum & carmen consurrexit uno impetu: donec Euripides in medium prosiluit petens ut expectarent, viderentque quem admirator auri exitum faceret. *Senec. Epist.* 115.

dence from all undue reflections upon the account of their temporal happiness.

And the sound belief of this will rectify all mistaking apprehensions, and clear all perplexing appearances about the sufferings of the righteous here.

Indeed if we consider the holiest men as they are sinners, their afflictions are so far from blemishing the justice of God, that they are the signs of his mercy: for all is a favour on this side hell to those that deserve it. David, an excellent saint, acknowledgeth the righteousness of God's judgment with respect to himself. But when the saints suffer for a righteous cause; and as the psalmist expresses it, "For thy sake are we killed all the day long, and are counted as sheep for the slaughter," Psal. 44. there is not a visible correspondency between the providence of God in his governing the world, and the unchangeable rules of justice, that those who do evil should suffer evil, and those who do well should be happy. As the apostle speaks to the persecuted christians, "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us." 2 Thess. 6. 7. Now there is a day coming when the persecutors shall be punished, and the saints be rewarded for all their sufferings, and the distribution of recompences shall be in the presence of the world, for the glory of divine justice. For the distinction that is made between men at death is private and particular, and not sufficient for the honour of God's government. But at the last day all men that have lived in several successions of ages shall appear, and justice have a solemn process and triumph before angels and men. As some excellent piece that is to be exposed to public view, is covered with a traverse, to prevent the disturbance in the working, and the discovery of the work till brought to such perfection as will surprise with wonder those that see it: so God is pleased to cover his proceeding for a time; but in the last day there will be "such a revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. 2. 7. that those who now doubt, or complain of his justice, shall admire and adore it.

3. The belief of this doctrine, as it vindicates divine providence, so it is powerful to comfort the saints under persecutions for righteousness sake; especially when innocence is wounded with slanderous darts, and calumnies are joined with cruelties,

representing them as worthy of public hatred. It was one of the subtile artifices of Julian the apostate, to mingle the images of the heathen gods with those of the emperors, that the doing reverence (as the christians were commanded) to all together, might imply a dereliction and renouncing of their religion, and their simplicity seem impiety: or if, jealous of slipping from their profession, they refused to do it, they might seem to deny the expressions of honour due to their emperors, and be reputed to suffer not as christian martyrs, but as rebels. But the believing consideration of God's righteous judgment will make them despise the censures and reproaches of malicious adversaries. "With me," saith the apostle, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged by man's judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord." 1 Cor. 4. 5. The severest censure was of no more weight, compared with the approbation of God, than the lightest feather that flies in the air, put in the scales against the globe of the earth. * The assurance of a righteous cause, and a righteous Judge, will preserve an inward and joyful tranquillity of soul in the midst of all the storms of reproach and scandalous imputations; like the calmness of a haven when the sea is tempestuous without. And this will fortify believers to bear with an invincible courage all the violence that is offered to them for their fidelity to God. All the wrongs and injuries they endure, shall be redressed with infinite advantage. The extremest evils to which they are exposed for Christ, are like the chariots of fire sent from God; not to consume but conduct Elias in triumph into the highest heaven. God will give them present support, inward consolations, and a future crown. There is an appointed day when oppressed innocence shall obtain the noblest victory, and disgraced godliness the most public and highest honour. "The faith of sincere christians shall be found to praise and glory." 1 Pet. 1. 7. They may suffer under the tyranny of time, but shall reign in the kingdom of eternity. The belief of this, when firmly radicated in the heart, is so powerful as to make them "glory in the sharpest tribulations," and joyfully triumph over satan, with his perverted malignant world. *Cantando rumpitur anguis.* But alas, the sin, and a great part of the

* Inter judicem justum, & conscientiam tuam, noli timere nisi causam tuam. *Aug.*

trouble of the saints, arises from their weakness of faith, and not patiently waiting for the day of the Lord. When heavy persecutions and great distresses are continued by the restless adversaries, they are apt, through impatience and instability of mind, to be full of sorrowful complaints that God delays their particular deliverance. And as sometimes the clock outruns the motion of the sun, that is the true measure of time; so their hasty desires prevent the eternal counsel of his will, that has determined the period of the miseries of his people, and of the prosperity of the wicked in the fittest time. And that he suspends his glorious coming to judge the world in righteousness, discourageth weaker christians, and makes them ready to faint "in the day of adversity. But the Lord is not slack in performing his promise, as men count slackness." 2 Pet. 3. 9. There is not the least reason to question his fidelity and power, or to suspect his love and remembrance of his people. And as the stars of heaven enlighten the earth, but the candles on earth, cannot enlighten the heavens: so the wisdom of God's counsel and providence should direct us patiently to expect his appointed time, but our glimmering reason cannot direct him.

4. The serious belief of future judgment is the most effectual restraint from secret sins. Men are apt to encourage themselves in evil upon the account of secrecy; it is the usual tinder of temptations. If solitude and silence, if the darkness of the night, or any disguises may conceal their wickedness from human eyes, they are bold and secure as to God. The psalmist declares what is the inward principle that actuates them, what is the language of their hearts: "all the workers of iniquity boast themselves; they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Psal. 94. 5, 6. But O the brutish folly of men, to think, because they do not see God, that he does not see them. As if one should shut his eyes in the face of the sun, and do some foul abominable thing, thinking himself to be unseen, because he sees no person. How vain is the impure diligence of the adulterer, the crafty diligence of the deceiver, the solicitous diligence of other sinners to hide things from the Judge of all? "Shall not God search it out, for he knows the very secrets of the heart?" What a confounding discovery will be made of secret wickedness at the last day? Here obscurity is the mask of shame that conceals it from the world. Or if only children

and fools that are not capable to judge of the indecency and turpitude of actions, be spectators, men are not touched with shame for foul things. But then their wickedness shall be displayed before God, the holy angels and saints. The actual belief of this would deprive satan of one of his greatest advantages, and be a blessed preservative from many sins that allure the consent by the temptation of secrecy. A considering christian will reject them with indignation, saying with Joseph, "how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The sins undiscovered and unpunished by temporal tribunals, shall then receive a just recompence.

5. The remembrance of that strict judgment is the most natural and powerful remedy against sensual temptations that so easily insinuate and engage the hearts of men. St. Peter reckoning up the heathens' sins, "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings," and "abominable idolatries" tells the christians, "that the Gentiles thought it strange that they did not run with them to the same excess of riot." 1 Pet. 4. 3, 4. As the disciples when our Saviour walked upon the waters, thought he had been a spirit, judging that no real body could tread on them without sinking: thus men are apt to think it impossible to restrain their carnal appetites when allured by pleasing objects. But the belief of the terrors of the Lord will damp the sensual affections when most strongly inclined to forbidden things, and extinguish delight in sin: for delight and fear are inconsistent. Therefore the wise preacher gives this counsel, "rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and sight of thine eyes: but know thou for all these things God will bring thee to judgment." Eccles. 11. This will change the apprehensions of the mind, and alter the taste of the appetite, and make the most enticing and irresistible lusts the objects of our greatest detestation.

6. The consideration that the Son of God, clothed with our nature, shall judge the world, "affords strong consolation" to his people, and is a motive of great terror to the wicked. How comfortable is it to his people that he who loved them above his life, and was their Redeemer on the cross, shall be their Judge on the throne? "He is the same Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" the same indulgent Saviour in the exaltation

of his glory, as when under sufferings, reproach and shame. He is described in that glorious appearance, by the conjunct titles of his majesty and power, "the Great God," Tit. 2. 12, 13. and of his compassion and mercy, "our Saviour," to signify his ability and affection to make them happy. When he comes with a heavenly train of angels to judgment, he will be as tender of his servants, as when he suffered for them in his humble state. He that paid their debt, and sealed their pardon with his own blood, will certainly publish the acquittance. How is it possible he should condemn those for whom he died, and who appear with the impressions of his reconciling blood upon them? How reviving is it that Christ, whose glory was the end and perfection of their lives, Phil. 1. shall dispose their states for ever? that he, who esteems every act of their charity and kindness done to his servants as done to himself, shall dispense the blessed reward? "Then the King will say to them placed on his righthand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25. O the transports of joy to hear those words from his life-breathing lips! The prophet breaks forth in an ecstacy, "how beautiful are the feet of the messengers of peace, those that bring glad tidings of salvation! but how much more beautiful is the face of the Author of our peace and salvation!" O how full of serenity, and clemency, and glory! The expectation of this makes them languish with impatience for his coming. Though the preparations of that day are so dreadful, when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon turned into blood," Acts 2. and the stars fall like leaves in autumn, yet it is styled a "day of refreshment" to the saints.

But how dreadful will his coming in majesty to judgment be to the wicked! * "They shall see him whom they have pierced," and with bitter lamentation remember the indignities offered to him. What excuses can they alledge, why they did not believe and obey the gospel? Our Saviour revealed high mysteries, but confirmed them with great miracles. He required strict holiness, but offered divine grace to enable men to do his will. "He poured forth his Spirit upon them," but their hearts were

* Videtis vulnera quæ inflixistis, agnoscitis latus quod pupugistis, quoniam & per vos, & propter vos apertum est, nec intrare voluistis. *Aug.*

as hard as rocks, and as barren as the sands. Then he will reproach them for their insolent contempt of all the perfections of his divine nature, and the bleeding sufferings of his human nature to reconcile them to God: for their undervaluing "neglect of the great salvation," so dearly purchased, and so freely and earnestly offered to them: for their obstinacy, that the purple streams that flowed from his crucified body, that all the sorrows and agonies of his soul were not effectual persuasives to make them forsake their sins: for their "preferring the bramble to reign over them," satan the destroyer of souls, and ungrateful "rejecting the true vine," the blessed Saviour, who by so many miraculous mercies solicited their love, and deserved their service; this will make the sentence as just as terrible, and the more terrible because just. This will exasperate the anguish, that the gospel shall be a "savour of death to them;" and the blessed Redeemer pronounce them "cursed," and dispatch them "to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels for ever." The judgment of the Redeemer will be more heavy than that of the Creator. For all the riches of his goodness which they despised, shall be the measure of their guilt and woes. All the means of grace used for their conversion, but frustrated by their perverseness, shall be charged upon their score. What consternation will seize the wicked, when ten thousand accusers shall rise up in judgment against them, and not one advocate appear for their defence? Satan will be ready to aggravate their sins above his own: for although the superior excellence of his nature and state did heighten his obligation, and consequently his disobedience to his Creator, and that he sinned of himself, derived a guilt upon him exceeding that of man's original sin, who was seduced to his ruin; yet in that justice was so quick and severe, that the angels after their sin were immediately expelled from their blessed habitation, no space of repentance was allowed; and no mediator interposed to obtain terms of reconciliation with the incensed Deity, their doom was final and irrevocable: but after our rebellious sin, the Son of God, such was his immortal love, was willing to be mortal to redeem sinful men, and freely offered himself a sacrifice to atone the divine displeasure: and a day of grace and long-sufferance was granted, and many compassionate invitations were sent from heaven to

soften their stony hearts: but they neglected and despised the grace of the gospel, and wilfully excluded themselves from mercy. In this respect they are more guilty than the fallen angels; and justice will revenge the abuse of mercy. Do they hope to soften the Judge by submissions and deprecations? Alas! he will be inflexible to all their prayers and tears. The Lamb will be then a lion armed with terrors for their destruction. Or can they appeal to a higher court to mitigate or reverse the sentence? No, his authority is supreme, and confirmed by the immutable oath of God. Or, do they think to resist the execution of the sentence? Desperate folly! The angels, notwithstanding their numbers and strength, could not for a moment escape his revenging hand. The whole world of sinners is of no more force against his wrath, than the light dust against a whirlwind, or dry stubble against devouring fire. Or do they think, by a stubborn spirit, to endure it? Self-deceiving wretches! If the correction of his children here, though allayed, and for their amendment, make "their beauty and strengh consume away as a moth," how insupportable will the vengeance be on his obstinate enemies? "Who knows the power of his anger?" Who can sound the depths of his displeasure?

CHAP. VI.

The consideration of eternal judgment should powerfully move us to prepare for it. Rules of our acceptance in that day. Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus is absolutely necessary for our acceptance. The pardon of our sins, and the rewarding our services, is upon the account of our Saviour's meritorious obedience and sufferings. Sincere and uniform obedience will be only accepted of our Judge. The frequent trial of conscience prepares us for the last judgment. This leads to repentance for past sins, and preserves from sins afterwards. The improving of our talents will make the last judgment comfortable. The zealous maintaining the truth and cause of Christ, will be rewarded in the last judgment. A beneficent love to the afflicted saints shall then be rewarded. An excitation to watch and pray, that we may with comfort appear before the everlasting Judge.

7. THE consideration of eternal judgment should be a powerful incentive to prepare ourselves for it. The affair is infinitely serious, for it concerns our salvation or damnation for ever. Yet the pleasures and business of the world fasten men in security, and hinder the entire application of their minds to prepare for their last account. It is an awful caution of our Saviour to his disciples, "take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares: for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth." A dissolute voluptuous course of life is joined with a brutish neglect of God and the soul: and the indulging the carnal appetite, though not in such enormous excesses as the profane are guilty of, alienates the minds of men from due considering their spiritual state, and lessens the preventive fear that makes us serious and diligent "to be found of God in peace." And others are so involved in secular business, that they are not at leisure to regard the "one thing necessary:" their minds are so overshadowed with the cares of the present world, they cannot take a right aspect of the world to come. The flood broke in upon the old world whilst they "were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling," and destroyed them all.

The last fire will devour this world in the same wretched incogitancy, and stupid neglect to prepare themselves for judgment. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man." It is a divine and solemn warning, "Behold, I come as a thief in the night: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he be found naked," without the robe of holiness, and be exposed to confounding shame in that day. When secure and careless sinners shall say, "peace and safety, sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child," as surprisingly, as irresistibly; "and they shall not escape." But the "wise foresee the evil," and esteem it their incomparable interest to secure the favour of the Supreme Judge. It is the inference the apostle makes from the certainty of our appearing before the Righteous Judge, "wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent," in this or the next life, "we may be accepted of him." 2 Cor. 5. 9. This was his great design, his chief care, his duty and his glory: never did any person more ardently aspire, and ambitiously endeavour for the obtaining a kingdom, than he did to secure his own acceptance with the Lord. In order to this, I will lay down the rules of our acceptance in that day, and conclude the argument.

First. Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus is absolutely necessary, that we may be accepted. This is such a belief of his all-sufficient merits, and his merciful inclination to save us, that the guilty and self-condemned sinner entirely consents to the terms of the gospel, as well as to the privileges of it, with a reliance upon his merits, and a resolution to obey his precepts. He is a "Priest on a throne, a Prince, and a Saviour," and so must be acknowledged and received. Upon this condition his righteousness is freely imputed to us for our justification unto life, without which we must perish in our sins. For,

(1.) The best saints are guilty, and deeply obnoxious to the law, and the judgment of God is invariably according to truth; so that appearing in their sins, they will be cast for ever. God's tribunal, like that of the severe Roman judge, is *reorum scopulus*, a rock that dashes in pieces all the guilty that come to it. Therefore the psalmist so earnestly deprecates; "enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." And the apostle, though a transcendent saint, divests himself of his own righteousness, that he may

be entirely covered with the righteousness of Christ; and renounces all things, that "he may be found in him as his surety" in that day of accounts, and obtain pardon by virtue of his satisfaction for sin. We cannot perfectly obey the commands, nor appease the displeasure of God: but the expiatory sacrifice of Christ propitiates the divine justice. This alone can make us stand in judgment before the "fiery law," and "the fiery tribunal," and the "Judge who is a consuming fire," to all the guilty that appear in their sins before him. The blood of the Mediator has sprinkled the throne of God in heaven; and our consciences being sprinkled with it by an unfeigned faith, we may appear before God the judge of all with a humble confidence, and enter into the holy of holies, the celestial sanctuary, with joy.

(2.) Not only the pardon of our sins, but the acceptance and rewarding of our services with eternal glory, is upon the account of our Saviour's complete righteousness. There are defilements in the persons, and defects in the works of the saints. Their most holy and fervent prayers are perfumed by the incense of his intercession, and so become grateful to God, Rev. 8. 3. Our best virtues are mixed and shadowed with imperfections; but in him all graces were conspicuous in their consummate degrees. Our obedience, supposing it perfect, is of no desert: "when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants:" but his obedience was infinitely meritorious by the union of the Deity with his human nature, and is the foundation of the excellent reward. Not that his merits derive a value to our works to make them worthy of eternal glory: as some noble mineral infused into water, that is in itself without taste or efficacy, gives it a medicinal tincture and virtue; for this is impossible, since the infinite dignity of his person, and his most perfect habitual and actual holiness, that are the fountains and reasons of his merits, are incommunicable to our persons and works. But the active and passive obedience of Christ is so satisfactory and meritorious, that God is pleased graciously to reward with the crown of life the mean services of those who are by a lively and purifying faith united to him.

Secondly. Sincere obedience, that is a uniform and entire respect to all the commands of God, will alone be accepted in that day: for his authority runs through all, and binds them on the conscience. David had this testimony from God himself, that

he "was a man after his own heart, that fulfilled all his will." And St. John refers the decision of our state to this, "if our hearts condemn us" of any allowed sin of omission or commission, much more "God will, who is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." 1 John 3. 20, 21. But if the illuminated tender conscience doth not condemn us of insincerity, "we have confidence towards God," that he will spare and accept us notwithstanding our frailties, and give free and safe access into his presence. The lives of many are chequered with a strange disparity, they are restrained from some sins of apparent odiousness, but indulgent to others; they are strict in some duties, but loose and slack in others, as if they hoped by way of commutation to be accepted of God; to expiate their delinquencies in one kind by supererogating in another. Some are painted pharisees in the duties of the first table, very exact in the formalities of outward devotions, but gross publicans in the duties of the second; careless of justice and equity, and charity to men; others are in appearance strictly moral in the discharge of their duties to men, and negligent of their obligations to God. But partial obedience can never endure the trial of conscience, much less of God. For what is the weak light of our minds, to the pure eyes of his glory? It will make us liable to inward rebuke now, and to open confusion at the last. St. Paul's "rejoicing was from the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity he had his conversation in the world." 2 Cor. 1. 12. And, as he expresses it in another place, it was his "daily exercise to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men." Though our conquest of sin be not complete, yet our resolution and endeavours must be to mortify it in every kind. Though our obedience has not the perfection of degrees, we must be equally regarding the divine law. If there be any secret favoured sin, either of omission or commission, it will render our petitions unacceptable at the throne of grace, and our persons at the throne of judgment; "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer." The law requires the performance of our duty without abatement, or denounceth the penalty without allay or mitigation: the gospel has not relaxed the strictness of the law as it is the rule of life, but as it was the condition of obtaining life. Sincere obedience is accepted by that gracious covenant, where the legal perfection is

wanting; but that is indispensably required of all. I may illustrate this by a passage of Alexander the Great, who being desirous to learn geometry, applied himself to a skilful instructor in it. But his warlike disposition made him more capable to conquer, than to measure the earth; so that tired with the first propositions, he desired his master to make the scheme more clear and plain, and easy to him. * To whom the master replied, that the theorems of that science were equally difficult to all, and required the same attention of mind to understand them. Thus the gospel of mercy requires of all sincere sanctification, and serious endeavours to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and without this none shall be exempted from condemnation.

To the sincerity of obedience, I shall add a more restrained notion of it as respecting religion. The duties of piety consist of an outward and inward part; and the one without the other, is but as a carcass without a quickening soul. Now there will be an exquisite anatomy of the heart in that judgment, a discovery of all the principles and motives by which men were actuated; and then he that is a saint inwardly, "in the spirit," who with pure aims and holy affections hath served God, shall have "praise of him." And those who have used God to enjoy the world, that have assumed pretences of piety for secular ends, shall be reproved. This will be a cause of wonder in that day, that many "who are highly esteemed by men" as excellent saints, "shall be an abomination to God." That in the broad way to hell thousands go thither is sad beyond expression, but not strange at all: but that in the path of heaven any should descend to hell, is astonishing. That those who live without God in the world, in the profane neglect of his worship, in a dissolute disorderly course, should fall under condemnation, is believed of all: but that those who have appeared zealous in religion, shall be at last rejected, is contrary to universal expectation. And not only the gross hypocrite that deceives others, but he that deceives himself by the external practice of holy duties, without correspondent lively affections; that prays with that coldness as if he had no desire to be heard, and hears with that carelessness as if he had no desire to be sanctified by the word, and is conversant

* Cui præceptor: ista, inquit, omnibus eadem sunt æque difficilia. *Sen. Ep.* 51.

in other parts of divine service in that slight manner, as if he had no design to be saved, shall by a convincing upbraiding light see his wickedness, in dishonouring that God whom he pretended to worship, and neglecting his soul. When the upright as pure gold shall be more radiant by the fire, the insincere like reprobate silver shall not endure that severe trial.

Thirdly. The frequent discussion of conscience, and reviewing our ways, is necessary in order to our comfortable appearing before our Judge. This is a duty of constant revolution: for while we are in flesh, the best saints, notwithstanding all their vigilance and diligence, are overtaken by surprisal, and sometimes overborne by strong temptations; and it is more necessary to beg for daily pardon, than for our daily bread. Under the law, if any one had by touching a dead body contracted uncleanness, he was to wash his clothes in the evening, and not to lie down in his uncleanness. This was typical of our duty, that we should wash away our sinful defilements every day in the purifying fountain of Christ's blood, "that is set open for sin and for uncleanness." And the method of the gospel to obtain the grant of pardon, and our comfortable sense, and the blessed effects of it is this, there must be a mournful sight, and serious acknowledgment of our daily sins, and a judging ourselves by the domestical tribunal in our breasts as worthy of condemnation. For though we cannot satisfy divine justice for the least sin, we must glorify it; and with humility and fervency desire that God would graciously forgive our renewed sins, with unfeigned resolutions and care against them for the future. Thus we are to sue out our pardon for sins committed every day. And whereas many errors in regard of our frailty, and their fineness, do slip from us, we should with contrite spirits implore the divine majesty "to cleanse us from our secret sins," Psal. 19. 12. such as through ignorance or inadvertency escape from our observation. If we are obliged to be reconciled to an offended or offending brother before the night, and "the sun must not go down upon our wrath," much more to be reconciled to an offended God, that his displeasure may be atoned. The morning and evening sacrifice was a figure of the constant use of Christ's merits and mediation for us. The secure neglect of renewing our repentance for our renewed sins, deprives us of the comforts of the covenant, and will make the thoughts of judgment as heavy as mountains upon the conscience,

when it is awakened out of its slumber. But when the soul's accounts are kept clear with heaven every day, O what a blessed rest does the penitent believer enjoy in the favour of God! O the divine calm of conscience, when our debts are cancelled in the book of God's remembrance! If we should be unexpectedly summoned to appear "before the Judge of all," the sight of our sins will rather excite thankful affections, and joyful praises of God for his mercy, that he hath pardoned them, than fearful despairing thoughts of his mercy, that he will not pardon them.

And as this considering our ways leads to repentance, and is a remedy for past sins, so it is a powerful preservative from sin afterwards. For as in war the greatest care is to fortify the weakest part of a besieged town, and make it impregnable; so a christian, by the experience of his infirmity and danger, will be more wise and wary, more circumspect and resolved against those sins whereby he has been often foiled, to prevent the daily incursion, and sudden surreption by them. And according to the degrees of our innocence, we have confidence of acceptance with God in judgment.

Fourthly. Let us improve with a wise and singular diligence the talents committed to our trust: for in that day we shall be responsible for all that we have received. All the blessings we possess, whether natural, our life, our faculties, our endowments, our health and strength; or civil, honour and dignity, riches and reputation; or spiritual, the gospel in its light and power, the graces and assistance of the Holy Ghost, as they are gifts from God's love, so they are talents to be employed for his glory. We are stewards, not proprietaries: for the supreme Lord does not relinquish his right in our blessings, that we may dispose of them at our own pleasure, but hath prescribed rules for our using them in order to his glory, our own good, and the benefit of others. And it is sad to consider that usually those who enjoy the greatest gifts, render the least acknowledgments, and the most abundant in favours are most barren in thankfulness. Time, that invaluable treasure, that is due to God and the soul, the price of which arises from the work of salvation to be done in it, how is it squandered away? Conscience would blush at the serious reflection, that every day so much is spent in the business of the world, or pleasures, and so little redeemed for communion with the holy God: that as in the prophetic dream the lean kine de-

voured the fat, so unconcerning vanities take up that time that should be employed for our last and blessed end. While time is miserably wasted, the soul lies a bleeding to everlasting death. More particularly, we shall be accountable for all the days of "the Son of Man" that we have seen, all the special seasons of grace: these we should improve for our eternal advantage, to prepare us for the divine presence above. But alas, the Lord's day that is consecrated for the immediate service of God, and should be entirely spent in it, and in things that have a necessary subordination to it, yet neither the enforcement of duty, nor incitations of love prevail upon the most, conscientiously to employ it in spiritual affairs. If they afford their presence at the public worship, it is thought enough; and as if the rest of the day was unsanctified time, they waste it either in complimental visits, or secular business, in recreations, or things impertinent to their salvation.

Riches are an excellent instrument of doing good: gold is the most precious and extensive metal, and by a marvellous art an ounce may be beaten out into some hundred leaves: but it is a more happy art by giving it, to enrich our own souls, and supply the necessities of many others. But great estates are often used to foment men's vicious guilty affections, pride, and sensuality; and it is called * greatness and magnificence to waste them in sumptuous vanities. I instance in these talents, because they are usually abused to the dishonour of the donor. If the slothful servant that hid his single talent in a napkin, and returned it without advantage to his Lord, was "cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth;" a fearful image of what will befal all unprofitable persons: how severe will their accounts be who lavish out their numerous talents to gratify their carnal appetites, and betray the blessings of God to his enemy the devil? Only the wise and good servant, that with prudent contrivance, and zealous endeavours, improves his talents, shall from the gracious Lord, in whom are all attractives and remuneratives of our service, receive an excellent reward.

Fifthly. Another rule of our acceptance at the last day is, that we must with courage and zeal maintain in our rank and places the cause of Christ. For thus he declares expressly, "Whoso-

* Nullis vitiis desunt pretiosa nomina. *Plin. lib. 73.*

ever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." Mat. 10. 33, 34. When the truth, purity, and power of religion, in doctrine, worship and practice, is discountenanced and overborn, our Saviour commands, and will reward our undiscouraged visible constancy in it. He will not only reign in our hearts, but be honoured with our lips, and in our conversations. Rom. 10. We usurp the title of christians, unless we adhere to our duty in despite of all opposition. The temptations that usually withdraw men from confessing and glorifying Christ, are such as work upon the passions of fear and shame. And the consideration of the last judgment will fortify us against both.

(1.) Sometimes religion exposes the professors of it to the loss of all temporal enjoyments, and of life itself. And when the honour of our Saviour requires such a service of us, when that confirmation is necessary to recommend divine truth to the belief and affections of others, when our cheerful and courageous example in suffering would animate those that are fearful to constancy and confession, then from cowardice to withdraw our testimony, is to betray him again. When our duty is attended with extreme dangers, then the sincerity and perfection of our love to Christ is brought to the strictest trial. As true carbuncles are discovered in the night, for the darkness redoubles their splendour; so the fidelity of christians is evident in persecutions, that inflame and excite their zeal to magnify the name of Christ in the sight of the world. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." 1 John 4. 18. But fearfulness hinders the expressing acts of love to Christ, and betrays to apostacy. For as every passion is a perturbation, so especially carnal fear, that blinds and disturbs the mind, and hinders the serious consideration of the reasons of our duty, and those motives to persevere in it, that are the fountains of our strength. From hence the timorous are often treacherous, and faith lies buried under the cold pale ashes of fear. Now the irregularity of this passion is best cured by directing it to the most powerful object. As the rod of Moses swallowed up the rods of the magicians; so a stronger fear will subdue that which is in a weaker degree. Our Saviour therefore threatens those that for the fear of men ("who can

but kill the body") dare not own and defend his truth and cause, that he will renounce them before his Father in the great day, the immediate consequence of which will be the "destruction of body and soul in hell." Mat. 10. 31, 32, 33. If earthly potentates had a jurisdiction over heaven, if men were to be tried by their laws at the last day, if their power extended to eternity, they might exact unlimited obedience to their wills; but conscience is a more desirable friend and terrible enemy than Cesar; and all temporal tribunals are subordinate and accountable to the supreme and eternal: there is "one Lawgiver and Judge, who is able to save, and to destroy for ever." It is the worst perdition to secure ourselves by the neglect of our duty, when we ought to perish for the glory of our Saviour. "He that saves his life, shall lose it."

(2.) Shame wounds deeper the breasts of some than violence. Zedekiah would rather expose his kingdom and life to the fury of the Chaldean armies, than be himself exposed as an object of derision by surrendering it. And satan, who understands the temper of men's spirits, suits his temptations accordingly. The purity and holiness of religion, expressed in the actions of the saints, is by the scurrilous reflections and bitter sarcasms of profane persons made contemptible. This is as foolish and malicious, as if a slave should reproach the son of a king, that he was like his father in his countenance and actions: for by how much the resemblance of God's holiness appears with more evidence and eminence in their lives, their divine relation is more certainly and justly to be acknowledged. Yet how many are ashamed of this glory? And zeal to vindicate the honour of religion is traduced and vilified, either as the effect of designing faction, or of the indiscretion and rashness of a weak judgment and strong passions. In every age the faithful servants of God are by scornful titles despised: "We are accounted," saith the apostle, "the off-scouring of the world." 1 Cor. 4. 17. But a generous christian looks upon disgrace for the sake of Christ as his honour. The apostles "rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts 5. 41. It is said of the baptist, "He was not that light, but came to bear witness of that light:" intimating as if that were the next degree of dignity to it. And our Saviour, speaking of the proofs of his divine mission, reckons up the witnesses of such dignity, that it is not

possible for sacred ambition to aspire to higher honour, than to be in conjunction with them: "they are John the baptist, his miracles, his Father, and the scriptures." John 5. 33, 36, 37, 39.

Let us appeal then from the light depraved fancies of carnal men, to the wise and faithful judgment and authority of the Son of God. He will at the last day, in the presence of his Father and all the court of heaven, give an incomparable crown to all that have despised shame for his sake. But those vile spirits, whose courage of straw is quelled by vain opinion, and the reproaches of fools, and have deserted the cause of Christ, shall then be clothed with confusion: for this we are assured by our Judge, that "whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Mark 8. 38. If the unnatural brothers were astonished when the governor of Egypt told them, "I am Joseph, whom ye sold;" how much more will false christians, when the Lord of glory shall tell them, I am Jesus, whom for base shame ye denied? How will it confound those abject wretches to be a spectacle of abhorrence and scorn before that universal glorious confluence? They would choose rather to be covered under the ruins of the world. If we value and desire the approbation of the King of angels, if we fear a final rejection from him, to obtain the one and avoid the other, we must entirely adhere to his interest, without any respect to the eyes and esteem of the perverse deceived world.

Sixthly. A cordial beneficent love to the saints, is a requisite qualification of our acceptance in the day of judgment. "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Mat. 25. 34, 35, 36. The union and endearments betwixt Christ and his people, are mutual and reflexive; as they are extremely tender of his glory, so he is concerned in all that is done to them. And though the perfection of love consists more in the affection

of the heart than in outward offices, yet our Saviour most congruously produces in judgment the conspicuous effects of love to them, the supplying their wants, allaying their sorrows, owning them when obscured and depressed by afflictions, and injuriously treated by others. This love of service that is directed and exercised towards the saints for the image of God shining in them, because they are the children of God, and members of Christ, and therefore extended to all in whom the reason of that love appears, shall be gloriously rewarded; for he interprets what is done upon his account to those who are his own by so many dear titles, as done to himself. And what is more becoming his excellent goodness, than to reward the works of mercy with saying mercy? But those who when Christ presents himself to them in his poor distressed members, and solicits their assistance, to protect them from injuries, to refresh their sorrows, to support them in their exigencies; those that have ability, but want affection to do them good, and incompassionately neglect the suffering saints, shall be sentenced to be tormented with the apostate angels for ever. What indignity is it to the Son of God, that those for whom he shed his most precious blood, should be in less value and regard with many, than the dogs and horses maintained for their pleasure? And if those on the left hand shall be condemned to eternal fire for the coldness of their love; how terrible will the judgment be of those that from the heat of their enmity outrageously persecute the servants of Christ for his sake, in their persons, estates, reputations, that with a worse than barbarous inhumanity seek their ruin? Is there any sin of a more mortal guilt? The infernal furnace is seven-fold heated for the punishing such wickedness.

To conclude this argument; let us observe the command of our Saviour, "To watch and pray always, that we may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man." These are duties of universal influence into our lives, the one prevents carelessness, the other vain confidence in ourselves: and the consideration of judgment to come, is the greatest motive to them, and the first principle of holiness. This should work more powerful in us, considering the day of death is equivalent to the day of judgment to every person; for then a particular sentence decisive and irrevocable passes, that shall be published at the last

day. Methinks the terrors of the Lord should engage our souls and senses to a continual preparation for his coming. It is represented so as to affect the eye, and keep it vigilant, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all," Jude 15. Behold, he comes in the clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. 1. 9. And to call the ear, and make it attentive; "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 1 Thess. 4. 16. How circumspect should we be in all our ways, since every action shall be reviewed by our Judge? St. Peter strongly infers from the dissolution of the world, as a most cogent argument, that we should be exactly and universally holy: "Seeing then all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 1 Pet. 3. 11, 12. But the consideration of the eternal judgment immediately succeeding the destruction of the world; O how powerful should it be upon conscience and the affections, to regulate the whole course of our lives with a final respect to God's tribunal!

In short, that which we read of the success of the apostles preaching to the Athenians upon the present subject, the immortality of the soul, comprised in the resurrection of the body and future judgment, is the same in all times and places. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter; and others believed." Acts 17. 32, 34. There are three differences of the hearers of this doctrine of so great importance: some deride it as an extravagant fancy; some believe it, and yield up themselves entirely in obedience to it; others do not absolutely reject it as the first, nor accept it as the second, but have a conjecture, or slight superficial opinion of it, or a speculative assent as to a history of things that do not concern them, and defer the serious consideration and applying of it to themselves. And of this third sort (O grief!) are the most of those who are christians in name. They delay till death the solemn reflecting upon the final judgment, and the inevitable consequence of it, a blessed or miserable estate for ever. And whereas the apostle, who had infallible assurance of God's love, did with a holy severity and self-denial abstain from all carnal complacencies that might ha-

zard the never-fading crown; "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means when I have preached to others, I should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. 19. 27. * Yet the most live and die in a secure state, without a preparation to appear before the presence of his glory.

* Væ miseris nobis qui de electione nostra nullam adhuc dei vocem cognovimus, & jam in otio quasi de securitate torpemus. *Greg. lib.* 29. *Moral.*

ON HEAVEN.

PSAL. XVI. 11.

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

CHAP. I.

The Saviour of men was before and under the law by various predictions and types described, to prepare the world for his reception with faith and obedience. In this psalm, a mixture of history and prophecy. The words of the text applied by the apostle to Christ's resurrection and ascension, and glory in heaven. The divine presence is the supreme and eternal felicity of the saints in heaven. The glory of the place considered. The happiness of heaven illustrated by sensible representations.

THE divine wisdom and goodness was pleased, before and during the legal dispensation, by various predictions and types to delineate the person of our Redeemer, and the work of redemption, to prepare the minds of men for his reception at his coming into the world. All the evangelical prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, as dispersed rays, are conspicuously united in him, "the Sun of Righteousness;" and as in a curious piece of Mosaic work, each stone according to its natural vein and colour is so exactly disposed, and with that proportion joined to another, that the lively figure of the human body results from the composure; so by variety of types, the entire image of our Saviour's life is represented from his first appearing on earth, to his ascending to heaven.

Now the due comparing and observing the harmonious agreement between the prophecies and types of the Old Testament, and the history of the New, is a powerful means to produce and establish a true lively faith in the blessed Jesus as the promised Messiah: for it is an infallible argument of the divine providence, in disposing times and things so, as the oracle should be verified in the event, and the mysterious figures substantially exhibited in the manifestation of the Son of God. It is true, his miracles raised admiration, and argued the concurrence of power truly divine: for the exercise of an absolute dominion over the order of nature, is a royalty reserved to God; but that his miraculous operations were foretold, added more authority to his person, and efficacy to his doctrine. Therefore our Saviour himself, in answer to the public question sent from John the baptist, whether he were the expected Saviour of the world, commanded the messengers to tell him what they heard and saw, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up," Matt. 11. Which healing miracles were foretold by the prophet Isaiah, Isa. 35. as the clear and distinguishing characters of the Messiah from all seducers, when he should come. The fulfilling God's word by the works of Christ, of which there was sensible evidence, was an irrefutable testimony that his miracles were true, and performed for the confirmation of the truth.

Now of all the chosen saints that foretold the coming of Christ, the new law of grace, and the new kingdom of glory, that he should reveal and establish: * of all that represented him in various particularities, concerning his person and offices, there was not a more illustrious type than David, that by prophetical words, and by prophetical actions did so clearly describe him.

In this psalm composed by him, there is a mixture of history and prophecy; some things in the literal and immediate sense referring to David: "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Our being at God's right hand, implies the highest honour; his being at our right hand, implies present and sure protection and defence. And of this David had the infallible promise of God to

* Illorum hominum non tantum lingua sed & vita prophetica fuit. *Aug.*

secure his hope, notwithstanding all his unrighteous and implacable enemies. But the following verses are applicable to David, but in a lower sense, and by a remote metaphor, and have their literal and principal accomplishment in our Saviour. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;" that is, in the state of the dead; "nor suffer thy holy One to see corruption:" that is, the body of our Saviour should be exempted from the corrupting power of the grave, and restored the third day to life. In this propriety and perfection of sense, the prophecy is applied by St. Peter to our Saviour's alone: for David died, "and saw corruption," Acts 2. 27, 29. and his body still remains under the dominion of death. And this last verse, "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore;" is applied by the apostle to Christ, his resurrection, ascension to heaven, "and sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thou wilt show me the path of life;" that is, introduce him into the kingdom of glory, and by experimental fruition make him partaker of it: "In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

In these words the causes and excellencies of the heavenly life are expressed. The causes, are the glorious presence of God, and the intimate application of his presence, and discovery of his peculiar love to the saints. This our blessed Saviour had respect to, as the complete reward of his sufferings: "Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." And his right hand implies his bounty that dispenses, and his power that secures our happiness. The excellencies of it, are "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

From the words I shall observe one proposition.

The enjoyment of the divine presence in heaven, is the supreme and everlasting felicity of the saints, and

In discoursing of this point, I will consider;—The place wherein the divine presence is gloriously revealed;—Show that the enjoyment of the divine presence is the supreme felicity of the saints;—and lastly, Prove that the felicity shall be everlasting.

I. The *place* wherein the divine presence is revealed. It is consistent with the divine immensity, to be differently present in some places. The essential presence of God is the same every

where; the influxive declarative presence of God is special, and otherwise in one place than another. He is more excellently present in the living temples, his saints on earth, by the gracious and eminent operations of his Spirit, than he is in the rest of the world: he is most excellently present in heaven, by the clearest manifestation, and the express characters and effects of the divine perfections.

This inferior world is framed with exquisite order; "The earth is full of the glory of the Lord:" yet it is but the sediment of the creation, the habitation of birds and beasts, nay of rebellious sinners: and by this we may raise our thoughts to conceive something of the glorious sanctuary of life, and blessedness above. It is called the "heaven of heavens," which is the highest comparison to instruct and astonish us with the amplitude and glory of the place. It is a place becoming the majesty of God, the image of his immensity. Our Saviour assures us, In his Father's house are many mansions," to receive the innumerable company of glorified saints. It is called "the excellent glory," 2 Pet. 1. 17.

The shining firmament, with all the luminaries that adorn it, are but the frontispiece to the highest heaven. All the lustre of diamonds, the fire of carbuncles and rubies, the brightness of pearls are dead in comparison of its glory. "It is the throne of the God of glory," wherein his majesty is revealed in the most illustrious manner. For pleasantness it is called paradise, in allusion to the delightful garden planted by the hands of God himself for Adam, his favourite, whilst innocent. There is "the tree of life." There are rivers of pleasure springing from the divine presence. "It is called the inheritance of the saints in light;" to signify the glory and joy of the place: for light has splendour, and conciliates cheerfulness, and is a fit emblem of both. As on the contrary, hell is described by "the blackness of darkness for ever," to signify the sadness and despair of the damned; and because in that centre of misery, a perpetual night and invincible darkness increases the horror of lost souls.

Heaven for stability is called "a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The present world is like a tent or tabernacle set up for a time, whilst the church is passing through the wilderness: but heaven is the "City of the living God," the place of his happy residence, the seat of his eternal

empire. The visible world, with all its perishing idols, shall shortly fall, this beautiful scene shall be abolished: but the supreme heaven is above this sphere of mutability, wherein all bodies compounded of the jarring elements are continually changing and dissolving: it is truly called "a kingdom that cannot be shaken." Briefly, the wise maker has framed it correspondently to the end for which it was designed: it is the seat of his Majesty, his sacred temple wherein he diffuses the richest beams of his goodness and glory, and his chosen servants see and praise his adorable excellencies for ever.

II. I will endeavour to show that the *enjoyment* of the *divine presence* in heaven, is the *supreme felicity* of the saints.

To make this supernatural blessedness more easy and intelligible to us, the scripture describes it by sensible representations. For while the soul is clothed with flesh, fancy has such a dominion, that we conceive of nothing but by comparisons and images taken from material things. It is therefore set forth by a "Marriage-Feast," Rev. 17. 7. to signify the joy and glory of the saints above. But to prevent all gross conceits, we are instructed, that the bodies of the saints shall be spiritual, not capable of hunger or thirst, nor consequently of any refreshment that is caused by the satisfaction of those appetites. The objects of the most noble senses, seeing and hearing, the pleasure of which is mixed with reason, and not common to the brutes, are more frequently made use of to reconcile the blessed and heavenly state to the proportion of our minds. Thus sometimes the saints above are "represented on thrones, and with crowns on their heads: sometimes clothed in white, with palms in their hands: sometimes singing songs of triumph to him that sits on the throne." But the real felicity of the saints infinitely exceeds all those faint metaphors. The apostle, to whom the admirable revelation was exhibited of the sufferings of the church, and the victorious issue out of them in the successive ages of the world, tells us, "it does not appear what the saints shall be in heaven. The things that God has prepared for those that love him," are far more above the highest ascent of our thoughts, than the marriage-feast of a king exceeds in splendour and magnificence, the imagination of one that has always lived in an obscure village, that never saw any ornaments of state, nor tasted wine in

his life. We can think of those things but according to the poverty of our understandings. But so much we know as is able to sweeten all the bitterness, and render insipid all the sweetness of this world.

CHAP. II.

Whatever is requisite to our complete blessedness, is enjoined in heaven. There is an exemption from all evils. Sin and all the penal consequences are abolished in heaven. The concurrence of all positive excellencies is enjoyed there. The body is revived to a glorious life. The soul lives in communion with God. The excellence of the object, and vigour of the actings upon it, the principal ingredients of happiness.

THIS will appear by considering that whatever is requisite to constitute the complete blessedness of man, is fully enjoyed in the divine presence.

i. An exemption from all evils is the first condition of perfect blessedness. The sentence of the wise Solon is true,

——Dicique beatus
Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

No man can be called happy whilst in this valley of tears. There are so many natural calamities, so many casual, which no human mind can foresee or prevent, that one may be less miserable than another, but none perfectly happy here. But upon the entrance into heaven, all those evils, that by their number, variety or weight, disquiet and oppress us here, are at an end.

Sin, of all evils, the worst and most hateful, shall be abolished, and all temptations that surround us and endanger our innocence, shall cease. Here the best men lament the weakness of

the flesh, and sometimes the violent assaults of spiritual enemies. St. Paul himself breaks forth into a mournful complaint, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" And when harassed by the buffets of satan, renews his most earnest addresses to God to be freed from them. Here our purity is not absolute, we must be always cleansing ourselves from the reliques of that deep defilement that cleaves to our nature. Here our peace is preserved with the sword in our hand, by a continual warfare against satan and the world. But in heaven no ignorance darkens the mind, no passions rebel against the sanctified will, no inherent pollution remains. "The church is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing:" and all temptations shall then cease. The tempter was cast out of heaven, and none of his poisoned arrows can reach that purified company. Glorious liberty! here ardently desired, but fully enjoyed by the saints above. And as sin, so all the penal consequences of it are quite taken away. The present life is a continual disease, and sometimes attended with that sharp sense, that death is desired as a remedy, and accepted as a benefit. And though the saints have reviving cordials, yet their joys are mixed with sorrows, nay caused by sorrows. The tears of repentance are their sweetest refreshment. Here the living stones are cut and wounded, and made fit by sufferings for a temple unto God in the New Jerusalem. But as in building of Solomon's temple, the noise of a hammer was not heard, for all the parts were framed before with that exact design and correspondence, that they firmly combined together; they were hewn in another place, and nothing remained but the putting them one upon another, and then as sacred they became inviolable: so God the wise architect, having prepared the saints here by many cutting afflictions, places them in the eternal building, where no voice of sorrow is heard. Of the innumerable assembly above, is there any eye that weeps, any breast that sighs, any tongue that complains, or any appearance of grief? The heavenly state is called life, as only worthy of that title. There is no infirmity of body, no poverty, no disgrace, no treachery of friends, no persecution of enemies. "There is no more death, nor sorrow; nor shall there be any more pain; for former things are passed away. God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people." Their salvation is complete in all degrees:

pure joy is the privilege of heaven, unmixed sorrows the punishment of hell.

ii. A concurrence of all positive excellencies is requisite to blessedness. And these are to be considered with respect to the entire man.

1. The body shall be awaked out of its dead sleep, and quickened into a glorious immortal life. The soul and body are the essential parts of man; and though the inequality be great in their holy operations, yet their concourse is necessary. Good actions are designed by the counsel and resolution of the Spirit, but performed by the ministry of the flesh. Every grace expresses itself in visible actions by the body. In the sorrows of repentance it supplies tears; in religious fasts, its appetites are restrained; in thanksgivings the tongue breaks forth into the joyful praises of God. All our victories over sensible pleasure and pain are obtained by the soul in conjunction with the body. Now it is most becoming the divine goodness, not to deal so differently, that the soul should be everlastingly happy, and the body lost in forgetfulness; the one glorified in heaven, the other remain in the dust. From their first setting out into the world to the grave, they ran the same race, and shall enjoy the same reward. Here the body is the consort of the soul in obedience and sufferings, hereafter in fruition. When the crown of purity, or palm of martyrdom shall be given by the great Judge in the view of all, they shall both partake in the honour. The apostle assures us, the bodies of the saints shall be revived and refined to a spiritual and glorious perfection. "Flesh and blood," the body with its terrene qualities, is mutable and mortal, and "cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven;" it cannot breathe in so pure an air. God tells Moses, "No man can see my face and live:" the sight of the divine glory is not consistent with such tempered frail tabernacles of flesh. Nay, the body must be freed from the innocent infirmities that were inseparable from Adam in paradise: for "he was made a living soul," that is, the soul united to the body was the fountain of the natural sensitive life, which was in a perpetual flux, the vital heat wasting the radical moisture, from whence there was a necessity of food and sleep to repair the substance and spirits, and preserve his life in vigour: but in the divine world, the body shall be spiritual in its quali-

ties and the principle of its life; it shall be supported by the supernatural power of the Spirit, without the supplies of outward nourishment, and exempted from all the low operations of nature: therefore our Saviour tells us, "the children of the resurrection shall be equal to the angels," prepared for the employment and enjoyments of those blessed spirits.

And a substantial unfading glory will shine in them infinitely above the perishing pride of this world, "and the glory of the flesh," that is but an appearance, like the false colours painted on the feathers of a dove, by the reflection of the light, which presently vanishes, when the posture is changed, or the light withdrawn. Of this we have a sure pledge in the glorified body of Christ, who is the "firstfruits of them that sleep: he shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like to his glorious body, according to the working of his power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." What can be more glorious, than to be conformed to the humanity of the Son of God? This conformity shall be the work of his own hands: and when omnipotence interposes, nothing is difficult. The raising the body to an immortal state of glory, is as easy to the divine power, as the forming it first in the womb. As the sun labours no more in the mines, in the forming gold and silver, the most precious and durable metals, than in the production of a short-lived flower.

2. The supreme happiness of man is in the soul's communion with God. This will appear by considering the principal ingredients of happiness: they are the excellence of the object, and the vigour of the actings upon it. The life and blessedness of God is to know and love himself according to his infinite perfections. And it is the highest happiness of the reasonable creature, to know and love God: for he is a spiritual, infinite, unchangeable good, and can fully communicate all that is requisite to entire blessedness, supply all the wants, and satisfy all the wishes of the immortal soul. The understanding and will are our most comprehensive faculties, the principles of our most eminent operations. To know and to love, are essential to the reasonable soul; and in directing those acts upon God, the rectitude, the perfection and felicity of man consists. As the intellectual creature by setting its mind and heart upon earthly things, is degraded into a lower order, the thoughts and desires

that are spiritual with respect to the principle from whence they proceed, are sensual and perishing with respect to their objects: so when our noble faculties are exercised in their most lively and vigorous perceptions upon the Supreme Good, man is advanced to an equality of joy and perfection with the angels. Now in heaven, God by his most evident and effectual presence, excites and draws forth all the active powers of the soul in their highest degrees; and, such is the immensity of his perfections, fills their utmost capacity, from whence a divine pleasure, a perpetual satisfaction springs, a joy that is as unspeakable as it is eternal.

CHAP. III.

The understanding shall be clearly enlightened with the knowledge of God. Here the revelation of God in his works and word is according to our capacities. In heaven it is most glorious, and our faculties are raised and refined to receive it. The nature of God, his decrees and counsels, his providential dispensations are revealed to the blessed.

TO unfold this more particularly. The understanding shall clearly see the most excellent objects. "Now we know but in part." 1 Cor. 13. The naked beauty of divine things is veiled, and of impossible discovery: and by natural or accidental weakness, the mind is not proportionable to sustain that dazzling brightness. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." In that enlightened state, the manifestation of the objects shall abundantly exceed the clearest revealing of them here. And the understanding shall be prepared in proportion to take a full view of them. Therefore the apostle compares the several periods of the church in respect of the degrees of knowledge, to the several ages of human

life. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." In children the organs, either from the excess of moisture, or their smallness, are indisposed for the vigorous exercise of the mind: some strictures of reason appear, a presaging sign what will be, but mixed with much obscurity. But when the organs are come to their just proportion and temperament, the soul displays its strength and activity.

To explicate this, it is requisite to consider the expressions in scripture, that signify the eminent degrees of knowledge in the blessed. Our Saviour assures us, that "the pure in heart shall see God." Sight is the most noble, extensive, and affective sense, and therefore fit to notify the clear, sweet and satisfying intuition of God in heaven. It is true, the Deity is spiritual, and invisible to the eye of the body, infinite, and incomprehensible to the eye of the soul; but the glorified saints so clearly understand the divine perfections, that our present knowledge of God, compared to that vision, is but as the seeing of a dark shadow in a glass, to the immediate view of the living substance and person. The discovery of the Deity to us in the present state, is by his works and word: and both are imperfect, and far inferior to the manifestation in heaven. The absolute fulness of perfection that is inseparable from the Godhead, is inimitable by any creature; for the perfection of any creature is limited in its kind as well as degrees. Therefore God was pleased by variety of effects and resemblances, to express and represent his attributes, that our minds might ascend by those steps to contemplate those perfections that are in him eminently and beyond all comparison. The light of heaven in all its purity and lustre, is but a shadow of his unapproachable brightness: all the excellencies of visible things are but a weak representation of the glory of his attributes, like the describing with a coal the beautiful colours of the morning: and compared with the immensity of his perfections, are like the describing in a sheet of paper the vast celestial spheres.

In his word there is a more clear and full discovery of his nature and will, but according to our capacity of receiving. The divine attributes in scripture are masked and shadowed under sensible comparisons: for no light shines into our minds here, but through the windows of sense. The intellectual powers de-

pend, as to the first notices of things, on the lower faculties and senses: therefore as Elisha in reviving the Shunamite's child, contracted himself to the proportion of the child, and "put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands;" so God is pleased to condescend to our capacity, and to adapt the expressions of his majesty to the narrowness of our imaginations. But in heaven the revelation of the Deity is much more glorious: and the mind is clarified from those terrene images that flow through the gross channels of the senses. In this present state our purest conceptions of God are mixed with dross, and very imperfect; but there the gold shall be separated from the dross, and our conceptions be more proper and becoming the simplicity and purity of God. Here the objects of glory are humbled to the perception of sense: hereafter, the sensible faculties shall be raised and refined, and made the subjects of glory. Now when divine light shines with direct beams, and the thick curtain of flesh is spiritualized and transparent, the soul enjoys the clearest vision of God. The light of nature was so defective as to the discovery of God's compassionate counsels to save the lost world, and the minds of men were so darkened from the fumes of their lust, that that light was but the hemisphere of the night in comparison of the revelation of the gospel: as St. Peter expresses the happy privilege of christians, and their consequent duty, "that they should show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." And the glorious gospel, compared to the revelation of God in heaven, is but as the twilight of the morning, wherein the light of the day is checkered with the shadows of the night, to the sun in its full lustre. In heaven we shall "see God face to face;" which signifies the clearest manifestation of his glory, and of his favour to the blessed: for the face is the throne of majesty and beauty, and the crystal wherein the affections are conspicuous. Accordingly when Moses prayed, "I beseech thee show me thy glory;" God answered him, it was impossible, "for no man could see his face and live." And the form of divine blessing to the people of Israel was, "the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee." Whether the immediate essence of God can be seen by the intellectual creature, is a question; but we are sure "in the heaven of presence," God exhibits himself to the blessed in a

most glorious manner: for according to the degrees of excellency in the work, are the impressions and discoveries of the cause. Now all gross material things in the low order of nature, are but weak resultances from his perfections, in comparison of their glorious effects in the divine world. The glories of the place, and of the inhabitants the angels and saints, are the most noble effects and expressions of the divine attributes. But in a transcendent manner God exhibits himself in the glorified Mediator. He is styled "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" to signify that God, in the person of the incarnate Mediator, is so fully represented to us, that in him we have a view of God's unchangeable perfections. This appears by the following words, "that having purged us from our sins, he sat down on the majesty on high:" for they respect the Son of God as united to the human nature, in which he performed the office of the priesthood, and took possession of his kingdom. During his humble state, though darkened with many afflicting circumstances, the divine virtues, wisdom, goodness, holiness, power, were so visible in his life, revelations, and miraculous works, that when Philip with that ardency of affection desired the sight of the Father, the only consummate blessedness, "show us the Father, and it suffices;" he told him, he "that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." But how brightly do they appear in his exaltation? We shall "see him as he is," in the majesty and glory of the Son of God. The apostle says, "we shall know as we are known:" this we are not to understand according to the exactness of the expression; for the sun may be as well included in a spark of fire, as God may be comprehended by our finite faculties. Beyond the fullest discoveries we can receive of the Deity, there remains an entire infinity of perfections, not to be known by the most intelligent spirits: but "as we are known," is a note of similitude, not of equality. The light of a candle as truly shines as the light of the sun, but not with that extent and splendour. We shall have such a perfect knowledge of God, as our minds can receive, and our hearts desire.

We shall then see what we now believe concerning the glorious nature of God, his decrees and counsels, his providence and dispensations. The sublimest doctrine of the christian religion, above the disquisition and reach of reason, is that of the sacred

Trinity, upon which the whole economy of the gospel depends. In assenting to this, faith bows the head and adores. But such is the pride of the carnal mind, that it disdains to stoop to divine revelation: and the seeming wise philosophers despised the primitive christians as captives of a blind belief. But this foul reproach was as unjust as many others wherewith they designed to disgrace christianity; for the humility of faith does not extinguish or darken the light of reason, but revives and increases it. What is more suitable to incorrupt reason, than to believe the revelation God affords of his own nature, who cannot deceive us? In the state above, where reason is rectified and enlarged, we shall understand that from eternity God was sole existing, but not solitary; that the Godhead is not confused in unity, nor divided in number; that there is a priority of order, yet no superiority among the sacred Persons, but they are all equally possessed of the same divine excellencies, and the same divine empire, and are the object of the same adoration. Our Saviour tells his disciples, "in that day ye shall know that I am in the Father," that is by unity of essence, and as naturally and necessarily God as the Father. This promise immediately refers to the time of pouring forth the Holy Ghost upon them after the resurrection of our Saviour, but shall be fully accomplished in heaven.

All things of a supernatural order shall be revealed. The "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," the union of the high perfections of the divine nature with the innocent imperfections of the human nature, the contrivance of our redemption, wherein there is an harmonious concurrence and concord of the principal attributes of the Deity that seemed irreconcileable; that product of the divine wisdom that is so adored by the angels, that astonishes and saves us, shall be unfolded. The divine counsels in governing the world, the designs, the ways, the orders and operations of God's providence shall be conspicuous. In some dispensations of God, we discern the eye in the top of his sceptre: the wisdom, the rectitude, the equity of his providence, is so visible in the defence of the innocent, and his justice and power in the punishment of the guilty, that it may convince the atheists who deny a providence, and causes all sincere believers to admire and reverence it. But there are other dispensations, the immediate reasons of which are so con-

cealed in the bosom of God, that only the Lamb, with whose blood the elect to glory are written in the book of life, can reveal: why the light of the gospel was never visible to so many kingdoms; "why many are called, and few chosen;" the unsearchable ways, and incomprehensible judgments of God, which St. Paul in an ecstacy admires, which it is not lawful to inquire into here, we shall then understand in such a manner, that light itself is not more clear. How often are the people of God here in miserable perplexities? and say with the prophets, "verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour!" It is true, a steadfast faith in the providence of God, that all that he does, and all that he permits and disposes is best, will quiet their passions, and change the tempestuous ocean into the pacific sea: but when they are admitted into the council of state above, and see the immediate reasons of his decrees, what a heavenly wonder, what an exquisite pleasure will fill their minds? When the original fountains of wisdom, as clear as deep, shall be opened, what sweet satisfaction will be shed abroad in their spirits? They will see the beauty of providence in disposing temporal evils in order to their eternal felicity: that as in a curious picture the darkest tinctures are so disposed, as to give life and grace to the orient colours; so all the afflictions of this state were but shadows or foils, to make their faith, and love, and patience more resplendent, and their reward more excellent. What our Saviour said to Peter, is applicable to the impenetrable dispensations of providence to us in our mortal state: "what I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter." Then the *arcana imperii*, the secrets of his counsels shall be unsealed, and we shall be able to expound the perplexing riddle, how "out of the eater came meat, and out of the strong came sweetness:" we shall understand that his overruling providence is most eminently glorified in extracting good out of evil; "for we shall know as we are known."

CHAP. IV.

The blessed effect of the vision of God in the saints. It is productive and conservative of his glorious likeness. It affects them with the most humble veneration of God's excellencies. It inflames them with the most ardent love of God, and of our Saviour.

I Will consider the blessed effects of the vision of God in heaven upon the saints. Our Saviour tells us, "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The beginning and introduction of our felicity, is by a lively faith here, the consummation of it is by present sight in heaven.

1. From the vision of his glory there will be a resultance of his likeness impressed on us. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." All the perfection and happiness of the saints is comprised in that promise. The sun, when the sky is clear and serene, forms its image on a cloud tempered to receive it, with that orient brightness, that the eye cannot distinguish between the copy and the original. Thus the uncreated sun by powerful emanations transforms the soul into its likeness, in that divine degree of holiness and felicity, as gloriously resembles God. Moses by conversing with God in the mount, and seeing his back-parts, returned to the Israelites with such a radiancy in his face, that they could not look on it without a veil. What an impression of glory is in the saints, who see his perfections in their infinite lustre? It is the privilege of christians in this life, above the church under the law; "they behold in the gospel as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory;" they become more holy and heavenly, more purified and adorned with his virtues and graces. Now if the vision of Christ here in a glass, an eclipsing medium, be so influxive upon believers, what an illustrious and infallible efficacy has the immediate, clear, and permanent view of his

glory upon the saints in heaven? That sight is productive and conservative of his image in its purity and perfection for ever.

2. The divine presence affects the saints with the most humble reverence and solemn veneration of God. This is an eternal respect due from the intellectual creature to the Creator, upon the account of his infinite and incommunicable excellencies. He is distinguished not only from idols, but from creatures of the highest order, by his essential, supreme and singular name, "I AM." Every kind of being, every spark of life, every degree of perfection is from his efficiency, and depends entirely upon his supporting power. The most eminent qualities of the creatures are but in show and appearance compared with the reality and stability of his glorious nature. In the scripture, wisdom, holiness, goodness, power, truth, immortality, are attributed to God, with the exclusion of all creatures from those prerogatives; they being his essential, infinite and incomparable perfections. They are separable qualities in the creatures, like the gilding and enameling of baser metal: but in the Deity, they are like substantial massy gold. There is a vast distance between created beings; but the distance between a fly, or a worm, and an angel, is nothing to the distance between an archangel and God, there being no comparison between finite and infinite. All creatures equally vanish, and disappear as nothing, compared to the glorious Creator. As if one from the region of the stars should look down upon the earth, the mountains and hills with the vallies would appear one flat surface, an equal plain, the height and the lowness of the several parts being indiscernible at that immense distance.

Now in heaven the divine majesty is most visible, and most awful and adorable. The sublimest spirits "cover their faces" before his glorious brightness. The prophet Isaiah had a representation of heaven: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, with twain he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." They highly honour him, by the reflection of his separate and peerless excellencies, his almighty power, his infinite supremacy and eternal empire, in their concert of praises.

3. In heaven the saints as perfectly love God, as they know him. This is the principal duty of angels and men to the blessed Creator for his admirable perfections, and his excellent benefits. The evidence of it is so entire, that the reasonable mind cannot suspend its assent: for goodness and beauty, the fruit and the flower of amiable things, do so recommend them to the understanding and will, that they powerfully allure and engage the affections. Now these are in God in unspeakable degrees of eminence. The prophet breaks out in a rapture, "how great is his goodness, how great is his beauty!"

It was a precept of the ceremonial law, that the firstlings of the flock, and the first and best fruits of the earth should be offered to God; not as if the first that opened the belly was more valuable in his account than the last, or the most early fruits in the spring more pleasing to him than the later in the autumn; but it was instructive, that our love, the "first-born of the soul, and the beginning of its strength," should be consecrated to God.

The love of God is the essential character of a saint, that distinguishes him from the unregenerate. Indeed, it is strange that God, who is infinitely lovely, and infinitely liberal and beneficent, should not prevail on the hearts of all men; but if we consider the degeneracy of mankind, how their minds are depraved and deceived, and their affections are vitiated, the wonder will cease. Carnal men have not due conceptions of God, and will not attentively observe his amiable perfections. St. John tells us, "he that loveth not, doth not know God." Knowledge is the leading principle in the operations of the soul. There must be a heavenly eye to discover the heavenly beauty, before there can be love of it. Now men are in ignorant darkness, and are defiled in flesh and spirit, and therefore cannot love God who is glorious in holiness. Without resemblance there can be no affectionate union which is the essence of love. The contrariety of dispositions infers a contrariety of affections. The scripture expresses this in dreadful colours: "the carnal mind is enmity against God: the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" that is, pride, and covetousness, and sensuality, which are the lusts of the carnal mind, and are terminated upon worldly things, are inconsistent with the love of God. The justice of God is terrible to the consciences, and his holiness odious to the

affections of the unrenewed. Till by divine grace the understanding is enlightened and purified to have right apprehensions of God; till the will and affections are cleansed and changed; till there be a resemblance of God's holy nature, and a conformity to his holy laws, they are not capable of delightful adhering to him, which is the internal essential property of love.

But those who are partakers of the divine nature, the holy and heavenly, "taste and see how good the Lord is:" and according to the illustrations of the mind, such are the impressions upon the heart; the love of God in their breasts here is like smoking flax, but in heaven it is a triumphant flame. God is the first fair, the original of all amiable excellencies, in whom they shine in their unstained lustre and perfection. When he fully reveals himself, and displays the richest beams of his love and glory, how transporting and endearing is that sight? Our affections that are now scattered on many things, wherein some faint reflections of his goodness appear, shall then be united in one full current to him, "who is all in all." In heaven the immense treasures of his grace are revealed. That when man for his rebellious sin was justly expelled from paradise, and under the sentence of eternal death, God should not only pardon, but prefer us to the dignity of his children, and prepare such a glory for us, and us for such a glory; this will inspire the saints with such ardent affections, that will make them equal to the angels, those pure and everlasting flames of love to God.

In heaven we shall be with "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, who is seated at the right hand of God." And how admirable will he appear to the sense and soul of every glorified saint? for "we shall see the King in his beauty." When our Saviour, was upon the holy mount, and one vanishing beam of glory appeared in his transfiguration, Peter was so transported at the sight, that he forgot the world and himself: how ravishing then will the sight of him in his triumphant majesty be, when we shall be transfigured ourselves? Now while believers are in the shadows of the earthly state, they "love their unseen Saviour" with such intense degrees of affection, as deface all the washy colours, all the vain loves of things in this world: but when they are admitted into his shining presence, and see him in the day of celestial glory, with what an ecstacy of affection will they be transported?

We shall then feel the endearing obligations our Saviour has laid upon us, who ransomed us with so rich a price, and purchased for us such an invaluable inheritance. For in proportion as we shall understand his greatness in himself, we shall his goodness to us. The eternal Son of God descended from the heaven of heavens to our lowly earth; and, which is more, from the majesty wherein he there reigned, and was visible to the angels; he became man that he might die, to redeem us from the most woful captivity, from "death, and the sting of death, sin, and the strength of sin, the law," and obtain a blessed life and immortality for us. O unexampled love! "Greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friend:" and what is the life of a sinful man, a vanishing vapour, a life mixed with troubles and vexation? and to lay down this for a friend deservedly dear, is the highest expression of human love: but for the Son of God to lay down his life, a life without sin, and without end, for immortality was a privilege due to his innocence, and for enemies, for the worst enemies, rebels by revolture from obedience to their Creator and King, is a love truly divine, and infinitely surpassing, not only the affections, but the "understanding and knowledge of all creatures." Ephes. 3. Briefly, he gave his life for us, and gives himself to us, the most excellent testimonies of love that we can receive from love itself; and we shall love him with all the strength of our glorified spirits.

CHAP. V.

Union with God by knowledge and love, causes the perfection and felicity of the saints. That union briefly unfolded. The pleasure that springs from knowledge. In heaven the knowledge of the saints incomparably excels the knowledge acquired here. The felicity that flows from the enjoyment of God, that fully satisfies the love of the saints. The blessed communion between the saints and Christ in heaven. The love of the saints is most fully pleased in the glory of God.

UNION with God by knowledge and love, accomplishes the perfection and happiness of the saints. The most pernicious effect of sin is the separation of the soul from God: and the restoral of us to happiness, is by reunion with him. This we obtain by Christ, who is Emanuel in his nature, and by office; who took our flesh, which he offered as a sacrifice to God to atone his displeasure, and gives his "Spirit to dwell in us," as a permanent active principle, by whose special operation faith is produced in our hearts; that is, such a belief of his love in redeeming us, as inspires us with a sincere and superlative love to him. And by these vital bands we are united to him, and as his true members, live the same life with him in grace and glory.

Now in heaven our union with God is more near and noble, more intimate and influential, more inseparable and eternal. It is observable in natural causalities, that what is of a more refined and purer nature, is more active and penetrating, and more closely unites with other things, than what is more gross and material. Light, which is the purest quality in the world, actuates all colours, and makes them visible, and actuates the eye, and conveys the lively image of the object with shining evidence into it. The sun shoots its invisible virtue into the deepest mines. Fire is more subtile and pure than water, and will pierce into solid metals, which the water cannot soak into. The glowing iron seems to be all fire. Now God is the purest Spirit, and of infinite energy, and can unite himself to our spirits more

intimately than the closest union between any creatures in the world. He unites himself to the understanding by an immediate irradiation, and discovery of his glorious excellencies. "In thy light," saith the psalmist, "we shall see light." He unites himself to the will, by the infusion of his love, and by that drawing forth our love to him. This union is complete in heaven, and most communicative of the divine influences to the saints, and consequently their conformity and fruition of God is in the highest degrees that created spirits are capable of. This is the most desirable and perfect state of reasonable creatures; for God is the ever-flowing fountain of felicity, the only stable centre of the soul, wherein it reposes itself for ever. Accordingly the psalmist speaks, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

When the soul opens its eyes to the clear discoveries of the first truth, in which is no shadow of error, and its breast to the dear and intimate embraces of the supreme good, in which is no mixture of evil, and beyond which nothing remains to be known, nothing to be enjoyed, what a deluge of the purest and sweetest pleasures will overflow it? We cannot ascend in our thoughts so high, as to conceive the excess of joy that attends those operations of the glorified soul upon its proper object. But something we may conjecture.

Those who are possessed with a noble passion for knowledge, how do they despise all lower pleasures in comparison of it? how do they forget themselves, neglect the body, and retire into the mind, the highest part of man, and nearest to God? The bare apprehension of such things that by their internal nature have no attractive influence upon the affections, is pleasant to the understanding. As the appearance of light, though not attended with any other visible beauties, refreshes the eye after long darkness: so the clear discovery of truths, how abstract soever, that were before unknown, is grateful to the intellective faculty. Thus some have been strangely transported with the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration, when the evidence, not the importance, of the thing was so ravishing; for what is more dry and barren of delight than the speculation of figures and numbers? Solon when near his end, and some of his friends that visited him were speaking softly of a point of philosophy, by that sound of wisdom was awakened from the sleep of death that was just

seizing on him; and opening his eyes, raising his head to give attention, being asked the reason of it, answered, * 'That when I understand what you are discoursing of, I may die.' Such was his delight in knowledge, that a little of it made his agony insensible.

But here are many imperfections that lessen this intellectual pleasure, which shall cease in heaven. Here the acquisition of knowledge is often with the expence of health; the flower of the spirits, necessary for natural operations, is wasted by intense thoughts. How often are the learned sickly? As the flint when it is struck, gives not a spark without consuming itself; so knowledge is obtained by studies that waste our faint sensitive faculties. But then our knowledge shall be a free emanation from the spring of truth, without our labour and pains. Here we learn by circuit, and discern by comparing things; ignorant darkness is dispelled by a gradual succession of light: but then perfect knowledge shall be infused in a moment. Here, after all our labour and toil, how little knowledge do we gain? Every question is a labyrinth, out of which the nimblest and most searching minds cannot extricate themselves. How many specious errors impose upon our understandings? We look on things by false lights, through deceiving spectacles: but then our knowledge shall be certain and complete. There is no forbidden tree in the celestial paradise, as no inordinate affection. But suppose that all things in the compass of the world were known, yet still there would be emptiness and anguish in the mind: for the most comprehensive knowledge of things that are insufficient to make us happy, cannot afford true satisfaction. But then we shall see God in all his excellencies, the supreme object and end, the only felicity of the soul. How will the sight of his glorious perfections in the first moment quench our extreme thirst, and fill us with joy and admiration! It is not as the naked conception of treasures, that only makes rich in ideas, but that divine sight gives a real interest in him. The angels are so ravished with the beauties and wonders of his face, that they never divert a moment from the contemplation of it.

The pure love of the saints to God, is fully satisfied in the

* Ut cum istud quicquid est de quo disputatis percepero, moriar. *Val. Max.*

possession and enjoyment of him, and consequently the greatest delight and complacency is shed abroad in their hearts. Love considered as an affection of friendship, is always attended with two desires; to be assured of reciprocal love, and to enjoy the conversation of the person beloved, the testimony of his esteem and goodwill. This kind of * affection seems to be inconsistent with that infinite distance that is between God and the creature. But though it is disproportionable to the divine majesty, it is proportionable to his goodness. Accordingly our Saviour promises, "He that loves me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him:" and to confirm our belief of this astonishing condescension, repeats it, "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." In the present state, the signs of God's special favour are exhibited to his friends. Now he bestows on them the honour of being his sons, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, the precious earnests of his love, "and seal of their redemption." But in eminency of degrees, the emanation of his love, and the effects of his beneficence, are incomparably more glorious in heaven. Here the saints are adopted, there crowned: there he opens all the bright treasures of his wisdom, the riches of his goodness, the beauties of his holiness, the glories of his power, and by the intimate application of his presence makes his love most sensible to them. Infinite goodness excites and draws forth all the powers of the soul, and fills the utmost capacity and expansion of the spirit: from hence perpetual pleasure and satisfaction spring. O the pure delights between God and glorified souls! God looks on them with an engaged eye, as his own by many dear titles, and is ravished with the reflex of his own excellencies shining in them. "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride" (it is the language of the divine love) "so their God rejoices over them. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over thee with singing." He is infinitely delighted in the communication of his goodness to them. And what a blessed rest do they find in the complete fruition of his goodness? All their desires quietly expire in his bosom. What triumphs of joy follow?

* Aristotle.

Can we frame a fuller conception of happiness, than to be perfectly loved by the best and most blessed being, and perfectly to love him, and to partake of the richest emanations of his "Loving-kindness, that is far more valuable and desirable than life itself?"

How precious and joyful will the presence of Christ be to the saints? It was his prayer on earth, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." When the saints are received into the everlasting kingdom, the first object that draws their admiring regards, is Christ on the throne. Inestimable felicity! whether we consider him as the Son of God, in whose conspicuous countenance all the glory of his Father shines; or as the Saviour of men, and the head of the elect, upon a double account: partly, that "he that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood," after suffering all indignities and cruelties for our sake, has received the reward of his meritorious sufferings, the triumph of his victory, being "glorified with the Father with the glory he had before the world was:" and partly, because every member shall be conformed to him in glory. The sight of the face of Moses when radiant, had no transforming efficacy, for the light of it was not in him as its spring, but by derivation. But the Son of God is light essentially, and the sight of his glory will transform us into his likeness. And how dear and joyful is the presence of the saints to Christ? "He then sees of the travail of his soul, the fruit of his sharp sufferings and bleeding love, and is satisfied." How delightful is it to him to see all his spiritual progeny safely brought to heaven, and made partakers of his glory and joy in the everlasting kingdom? For according to the extent of the object, and dearness of the affection, joy rises. He will then present them to his Father with infinite complacency; "Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

The dearest affections of Christ and the saints in heaven, are mutual and reflexive. In the sacred song, the expressions of love, desire, and joy, borrowed from the espousals of Solomon and his beloved wife, are, as it were, characters in the bark, to be understood in a spiritual sense, of the mystical marriage of Christ and the church. What endearing intercourse is there be-

tween the most perfect lover, and his spouse inspired with the same pure flame? Here amiable perfections attract his eye and heart: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee," Cant. 7. His propriety in the church is his invaluable treasure: "My vineyard which is mine, is ever before me." He repeats the word "Mine," in the sweetest and most tender manner. And the church, with the same harmonious affections, speaks of Christ. She contemplates in a soft ecstacy in ever-satisfying beauty. "My beloved is the chiefest of ten thousand, he is altogether lovely," Cant. 10. 6. She breaks forth in triumph, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Cant. 6. By all their expressions of joyful love and union, we may ascend in our thoughts, what are the joys of heaven, where the communion of Christ and the church is entire and uninterrupted for ever. If faith and love of our unseen Saviour produce "a joy unspeakable and glorious," as if believers were wrapped up to paradise, or paradise descended into them, what will the sight and fruition of him? There is as great a difference in degrees between the joy that flows from the assurance and application of faith, and the joy from vision and full possession, as between the impression of joy the forerunner of Christ felt, when he sprang in the womb at the coming of our Saviour; and his ravishing joy, when he saw Christ, and pointed him out to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world."

3. The supreme joy of the saints is for the felicity and glory of God himself. For as the holy soul feels no more powerful motive to love God, than because he is most worthy of it, as he is God, a being of infinite excellencies, and therefore to be loved above the dearest persons and things, even itself; so the highest joy it partakes of is from this consideration, that God is infinitely blessed and glorious. For in this the supreme desire of love is accomplished, that the most beloved object is perfectly honoured and pleased. In heaven the love of the saints to God is in its highest perfection, and they see his glory in the most perfect manner, which causes a transcendent joy to them. And this is one reason why the saints, though shining with unequal degrees of glory, are equally content. For their most ardent love being set on God, that he is pleased to glorify himself by such various communications of his goodness, is full satisfaction to their de-

sires. Besides, in those different degrees of glory, every one is so content with his own, * that there is no possible desire of being but what he is.

CHAP. VI.

The communion of the angels and saints in heaven affords the purest pleasure. Love unites them. The allays of love cease there. As love is enlarged in its object and degrees, such is the delight that results from it. The joy of heaven is without defect or end. The productive causes of it are always equal. The face of God always shines there, and the contemplation of it is fixed. The constant enjoyment of God in heaven does not lessen the delight of the saints. The reasons why the fruition of sensible things without change is tedious. All those causes of dissatisfaction cease in heaven. The saints have as lively a perception of their happiness for ever as in the beginning of it.

IN heaven "the innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly of the church of the first-born," as they receive happiness from the sight of God, so they communicate the purest pleasure to one another. An unfeigned ardent affection unites that pure society. Our love is now kindled, either from a relation in nature, or a civil account, or some visible excellencies that render a person worthy of our choice and friendship: but in heaven the reasons are greater, and the degrees of love incomparably more fervent. All carnal alliances and respects cease in that supernatural state. The apostle tells us, "If I have known Christ after the flesh, I know him so no more." By the resurrection and ascension of Christ he was transported into another world, and had communion with him as a heavenly king, without

* Sic itaq; habebit donum aliud alio minus, ut hic quoq; donum habeat, ne velit amplius. *Aug.*

low regards to the temporal privilege of conversing with him on earth. The spiritual relation is more near and permanent than the strictest band of nature. The saints have all relation to the same heavenly Father, and to Jesus Christ the Prince of peace, and head of that happy fraternity. The principal motives of love here, are the inherent excellencies of a person. Wisdom, holiness, goodness, fidelity are mighty attractives, and produce a more worthy affection, a more intimate confederacy of souls, than propinquity in nature, or any carnal respects. Virtue is amiable in an old person, though wrinkled and deformed: vice is hateful in a young person, though beautiful. There are clearer eyes than those of flesh, a purer light than what is sensible, a diviner beauty than what is corporeal, and a nobler love than what is sensual. David declares that "all his delight was in the excellent." But there are allays of this spiritual love here. For,

1. There are relics of frailty in the best men on earth, some blemishes that render them less amiable when discovered. Here their graces are mixed with infirmities, and but ascending to glory. Accordingly our love to them must be regular, and serene, not clouded with error, mistaking defects for amiable qualities. But in heaven, the image of God is complete by the union of all the glorious virtues requisite to its perfection. Every saint there exactly agrees with the first exemplar, a divine beauty shines in them ever durable, a beauty that darts no contagious fire, that is inviolable and can suffer no injury. The apostle tells us, "The church shall be glorious in holiness, without spot or wrinkle," or any thing that may cast an aspect of deformity upon it.

2. In the present state the least part of the saints' worth is visible. As the earth is fruitful in plants and flowers, but its riches are in mines of precious metals, and the veins of marble hidden in its bosom. True grace appears in sensible actions, "but its glory is within." * The sincerity of aims, the purity of affections, the impresses of the Spirit on the heart, the interior beauties of holiness, are only seen by God. Besides, such is

* O si animum boni viri liceret inspicere, ex magnifico placidoq; fulgentem! nonne veluti numinis occursu obstupefacti essemus? *Senec.*

the humility of eminent saints, that the more they abound in spiritual treasures, the less they show. As the heavenly bodies when in nearest conjunction with the sun, and fullest of light, make the least appearance to our sight. But all their ecellencies shall then be in view, "The glory of God shall be revealed in them." And how attractive is the divine likeness to a holy eye? How will it ravish the saints to behold an immortal loveliness shining in one another? Their love is reciprocal, proportionable to the cause of it. An equal, constant flame is preserved by pure materials. Every one is perfectly amiable, and perfectly enamoured with all. How happy is that state of love? The psalmist breaks out in a rapture, "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Love is the beauty and strength of societies, the pleasure of life. How excellent is the joy of the blessed, when the prayer of Christ shall be accomplished, that they all may be one; "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." God is absolutely one in his glorious nature and will, and therefore unalterably happy: and their inviolable union of love is a ray of the essential unity between the sacred persons. There are no divisions of heart and tongues, as in this Babel; but the most perfect and sweetest concord, an eternal agreement in tempers and inclinations. There are no envious comparisons; for love that affectively transforms one into another, causes the glory of every saint to redound to the joy of all. Every one takes his share in the felicity of all, and adds to it. Such is the power of that celestial fire wherein they all burn, that it melts and mixes souls in such an entire union, that by complacence, and an intimate joy, the blessedness of all is, as it were, proper to every one; as if every one were placed in the hearts of all, and all in the heart of every one. If in the church of the firstborn christians in the earthly Jerusalem, the band of charity was so strict, that it is said, the "Multitude of believers were of one heart, and one soul;" how much more intimate and inseparable is the union of the saints in Jerusalem above, where every one loves another as himself? It is recorded of Alexander, that entering with Hephestion his favourite into the pavilion of the mother of Darius, then his prisoner, she bowed to the favourite, as having a greater appearance of majesty, thinking him to be Alexander: but advised of her error, she humbly begged his pardon. To

whom the generous king replied, * 'You did not err, mother, this is also Alexander.' Such was their affection, that whoever was taken of them, the other was taken in him; the less ascending in the greater, without degrading the greater in the less. This is a copy of the holy love of the blessed; but with the same difference, as between the description of a star with a coal, and its beauty in its proper aspect. And where all is love, all is delight. The act itself is its own reward. As that benign and pleasant affection is enlarged with respect to the object, and its degrees, such is the complacence and delight that results from it. In that blessed society there is a constant receiving and returning of love and joy. And that double exercise of the saints, in the perfect circle of love, is like the pleasant labour of the bees, who all the day are flying to the gardens, and returning to their hives, and all their art is in extracting the purest spirits from fragrant flowers, and making sweet honey. O how do they rejoice and triumph in the happiness of one another? With what an unimaginable tenderness do they embrace? What reciprocations of endearments are between them? O their ravishing conversation, and sweet intercourse! for their presence together in heaven is not a silent show. In the transfiguration, Moses and Elias talked with Christ: we may understand a little of it, by the sensible complacence that is among sincere friends here. In pure amity there is a threefold union: a union of resemblance, that is the principle of it; likeness causes love: a union of affection, that is its essence; it is said of Jonathan, that incomparable friend, "his soul was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul:" the union of conversation, that is requisite to the satisfaction of love. What an entertainment of love and joy is there in the presence and discourses of dear friends! their mutual aspects, like a chain composed of spirits luminous and active, draw and fasten their souls to one another: the felicity of love consists in their conversation. Now in heaven whatever is pleasant in friendship is in perfection; and whatever is distasteful by men's folly and weakness is abolished. With what excellent discourses do they entertain one another? If David felt such inward pleasure from the sense of God's favours, that he could not restrain the expression of it, but invites the saints,

* Non errarti, mater, nam hic Alexander est. Curt. l. 3.

"Come and hear, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul:" certainly in heaven, the blessed with overflowing affections recount the divine benefits; the admirable methods, whereby the life of grace was begun, preserved and carried on in the midst of temptations; the continual succession of mercies in the time of their hopes, and the consummation of all in the time of their enjoyment. How joyfully do they concur in their thanksgivings to God for the goodness of creation; in making them reasonable creatures, capable to know, love and enjoy him, when they might have been of the lowest order in the whole spheres of beings; for his compassionate care and providence over them in this world, but especially for his sovereign and singular mercy in electing them to be vessels of honour; for his powerful grace, in rescuing them from the cruel and ignominious bondage of sin; for his most free love, that justified them from all their guilt by the death of his only Son, and glorified them with himself. They are never weary in this delightful exercise, but continually bless him for his "Mercy that endures for ever." We may judge by the saints here, when they are in a fit disposition to praise God, what fervours they feel in their united praises of him in heaven. The psalmist in an ecstacy calls to all the parts of the world to join with him: "The Lord reigns, let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad; let the sea roar, let the fields be joyful and all that dwell therein." He desires that nature should be elevated above itself, that the dead parts be inspired with life, the insensible feel motions of joy, and those that want a voice break forth in praises, to adorn the divine triumph. With what life and alacrity will the saints in their blessed communion celebrate the object of their love and praises? The seraphims about the throne "cried to one another," to express their zeal and joy, in celebrating his eternal purity and power, and the glory of his goodness. O the unspeakable pleasure of this concert! when every soul is harmonious, and contributes his part to the full music of heaven. O could we hear but some echo of those songs wherewith the heaven of heavens resounds, some remains of those voices wherewith the saints above "triumph in the praises," in the solemn adoration of the King of spirits, how would it inflame our desires to be joined with them? "Blessed are those that are in thy house, they always praise thee."

III. The fulness of joy in heaven is everlasting, without defect, and without end.

1. It is undecaying, the productive causes are conservative of it, being always equal. Those are the beatific object, and the continual fruition of it. Whilst we are here below, the Sun of Righteousness, as to our perception and sense, has ascensions and declinations, accesses and recesses. And our earth is not so purified, but some vapours arise that intercept his cheerful refreshing light. From hence there are alternate successions of spiritual comforts and sorrows, of doubts and filial confidence in the saints. It is a rare favour of heaven, when a humble believer in his whole course is so circumspect, as not to provoke God to appear displeased against him: when a christian (as those tutelar angels spoken of in the gospel) always behold the face of his heavenly Father, and converses with him with a holy liberty. And what a torment the "hiding of God's face" is to a deserted soul, only they know who feel it. External troubles are many times attended with more consolations to the Spirit, than afflictions to sense; but to love God with a transcendent affection, and to fear he is our enemy, no punishment exceeds, or is equal to it. As his loving-kindness in their esteem is better than life, so his displeasure is worse than death. How do they wrestle with God by prayers and tears, and offer, as it were, a holy violence to the King of heaven, to recover their first serenity of mind, the lost peace of heart? How passionately do they cry out with Job in the book of his patience, "O that I was as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle!" Job 29. 2, 3. And sometimes God delays the revealing himself even to his dearest children; not that he does not see their necessities, and hear their prayers, or is so hard that till their extremities he is not moved with compassion, but for wise and holy reasons: either "that they may not return to folly," if by any presumptuous sin they forfeited their peace; or if they have been careful to please him, yet he may deprive them of spiritual comforts for a time, to keep them humble, and that with an obedient resignation to his sovereign pleasure they may wait for his reviving presence. And then joy returns greater than before: for thus God usually reu-

ders with interest what he suspended only for trial. But the saints above are for ever enlightened with the vital splendour, and dear regards of his countenance, always enjoy his beamy smiles. A continual effusion of glory illustrates heaven and all its blessed inhabitants.

And their contemplation of God is fixed. If the object, though extraordinarily glorious, were transient, or the eye so weak that it could only see it but by glances, the height of joy would not be perpetual. But the mind is prepared with supernatural vigour, to see the brightness of God's face, and by the most attentive application always converses with that blessed object: so that the joy of heaven is never intermitted for a moment. They always see, and love, and rejoice, and praise him.

It is possible a carnal suspicion may arise in some, as if the uniform perpetual vision of the same glory might lose its perfect delightfulness. For those who seek for happiness in the vanity of the creatures, are always desirous of change, and have their judgments so corrupted, that while they languish with a secret desire after an unchangeable good, yet they conceive no good as desirable, that is not changed.

But to correct this gross error of fancy, let us a little inquire into the causes of dissatisfaction, that make the constant fruition of the same thing here to be tedious.

(1.) Sensible things are of such a limited goodness, that not any of them can supply all our present wants, so that it is necessary to leave one for another. And the most of them are remedies of our diseased appetites, and if not temperately used, are destructive evils. Eating and drinking are to extinguish hunger and thirst, but continued beyond just measure, become nauseous. Besides the insufficiency of their objects, the senses themselves cannot be satisfied all at once. The ear cannot attend to delightful sounds, and the eye be intent on beautiful colours at the same time. The satisfaction of one sense defeats another of enjoying its proper good; therefore the same object is not constantly pleasant, but the heart is distempered from as many causes, as there are desires unaccomplished. Add farther, all things under the sun afford only a superficial delight, and miserably deceive the expectations raised of them: and many times there is a mixture of some evil in them, that is more offensive than the good is delightful. The honey is attended with a sting, so that

often those very things we sigh after through vehement desire, when they are obtained, we sigh for grief. Now all these causes of dissatisfaction cease in heaven; * for there is an infinite variety in God, and whatever is truly desirable, is eminently enjoyed in him. And in his presence all the powers of the soul are drawn out in their most pleasant exercise, and always enjoy their entire happiness. The fruition of him exceeds our most raised hopes, as much as he is more glorious in himself than in any borrowed representations. God will be to us incomparably "above what we can ask or think." The compass of our thoughts, the depth of our desires are imperfect measures of his perfections. And as he is a pure good in himself, so he is prevalent over all evil. It is evident therefore, that nothing can allay the joys of saints, when they are in God's presence.

(2.) Novelty is not requisite to ingratiate every good, and make it perfectly delightful. † God is infinitely happy, to whom no good was ever new. It is indeed the sauce that gives a delicious taste to inferior things. For men relish only what is eminent; and the good things of this world are so truly mean, that they are fain to borrow a show of greatness by comparison with a worse estate preceding. But an infinite good produces always the same pure equal complete joy, because it arises from its intrinsic perfection, that wants no foil to commend it. The psalmist breaks forth, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" This is no vanishing rapture, but a constant joyful height of affection. God, the essential happiness of the saints, is always perfectly lovely and delightful to them.

(3.) The glorified saints in every period of their happy state, have as lively a perception of it as in the beginning. To make this evident, we must consider that the pleasure of novelty springs from a quick sense of the opposite terms, between our condition in the want of some desired good, and after our obtaining it. Now the mind is more intense on the advantage,

* Vitæ nos tædium tenet timor mortis, natat omne consilium, nec implere nos ulla fælicitas potest. Causa autem est, quod non pervenimus ad illud bonum immensum & insuperabile, ubi necesse est, consistat nobis voluntas nostra, quia ultra summum non est locus. *Senec. Ep.* 74.

† Εἰ ἡ φύσις ἁπλὴ εἴη, ἡ αὐτὴ πραξις ἡδίστη ἂεὶ. Διὸ ὁ Θεὸς ἀεὶ μίαν καὶ ἁπλῆν χαίρει ἡδονήν. *Arist. Eth. l.* 7. *c. ult.*

and more strongly affected at first. One newly freed from the torments of a sharp disease, feels a greater pleasure than from a constant tenour of health. Those who are raised from a low state to eminent dignity, are transported with their first change, but in tract of time the remembrance of their mean condition is so weakened and spent, that it is like the shadow of a dream, and proportionably their joy is lessened. Honours, like perfumes, by custom, are less sensible to those that carry them. But the saints above always consider and feel the excellent difference between their suffering and triumphant state. They never lose that ravishing part of felicity, the vivid sense of past evils. Their reflections are always as strong on the misery from whence they were raised to the pitch of happiness, as in their first glorious translation. In what an ecstacy of wonder and pleasure will they be, from the fresh memory of what they were, and the joyful sense what they are? "I was (says the admiring soul) poor, blind, and naked;" but O miraculous and happy alteration! I am full of light, enriched with the treasures of heaven, adorned with divine glory. I was under the tyrannous power of satan, "but he is bruised under my feet." I was sentenced to an everlasting separation from the presence of God, my only life and joy; but now am possessed of my supreme good. O how transporting is the comparison of these wide and contrary extremes? How beautiful and pleasant is the day of eternity, after such a dark tempestuous night! How does the remembrance of such evils produce a more lively and feeling fruition of such happiness! how strangely and mightily does "Salvation with eternal glory affect the soul!" This gives a sprightly accent to their everlasting hallelujahs: this preserves an affectionate heat in their thanksgivings to their victorious deliverer. And thus their happiness is always the same, and always new. Their pleasure is continued in its perfection.

CHAP. VII.

The number of possessors of heaven cannot lessen its felicity. The blessedness of the saints is without end. In the first creation, the happiness of angels and men was mutable. The happiness in heaven as unchangeable as the love of God to the saints, and the love of the saints to him. The woful folly of men in refusing such a happiness. An excitation to seek this happiness. The original moving cause of conferring this happiness, is the mercy of God: the meritorious cause, is the obedience and passion of Christ. It is impossible for an innocent creature, much more for the fallen creature, to deserve any good thing from God. Our Saviour expiated the guilt of sin, and by the merits of his obedience purchased the kingdom of heaven for believers.

THE number of possessors cannot lessen their felicity. The divine presence is an unwasted spring of pleasure, equally full and open to all, and abundantly sufficient to satisfy the immensity of their desires. Envy reigns in this world, because earthly things are so imperfect in their nature, and so peculiar in their possession, that they cannot suffice, nor be enjoyed by all. But in heaven none is touched with that base, low passion: for God contains all that is precious and desirable in the highest degrees of perfection, and all partake of his universal goodness, without intercepting one another. In the kingdom of heaven there is no cause for the elder brother to repine at the Father's bounty to the younger, nor for the younger to supplant the elder to obtain the birthright. "The heirs of God" are all raised to sovereign glory; and every one enjoys him as entirely and fully as if solely his felicity. God is a good as indivisible as infinite, and not diminished by the most liberal communications of himself. We may illustrate this by comparing the price of our redemption, and the reward. The death of Christ is a universal benefit to all the saints, yet it is so applied to every believer for his perfect redemption, as if our Saviour in all his agonies and sufferings had no other in his eye and heart, as if all his prayers, his tears, his blood were offered up to his Father only for that person. The common respect of it the apostle declares in those admirable

words, that signify such an excess of God's love to us; "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" But to imagine that the * propriety of every believer is thereby prejudiced, is not only false, but extremely injurious to the merit and dignity, and to the infinite love of Christ. Therefore the same apostle tells us, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;" as if he were the sole object of Christ's love, the end and reward of his sufferings. And this appropriating of it to himself, is no prejudice to the rights of all others. St. John describes himself by truly that glorious title, "the disciple whom sus loved." Could he speak this of himself, without the injury and indignation of the other disciples? Certainly he might. For if we consider that incomprehensible love of Christ, expressed to them all at his last supper, after Judas was gone forth; "As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you;" we may easily understand, that every one of them might justly believe that he was singularly beloved of Christ. They were all received in the heart, though (with John) they did not all lean on the breast of their divine master. Thus in heaven God is the universal treasure of all the saints, and the peculiar portion of every one, not engrossed by possessing, nor wasted by enjoying. † As by his essence he equally fills the whole world, and every part of it; and by his providence equally regards all and every particular creature: so in heaven he dispenses the riches of his love to all, that they cannot desire more, if every one of them were the sole heir of all their merits of his Son, and enjoyed him alone for ever.

The blessedness of the saints, as it is without diminution, so it is without end: it is complete and continual for ever. This makes heaven to be heaven; the security is as valuable as the

* Et totum se dedit universis, & totum singulis. Ac per hoc quicquid passione sua salvator præstitit, sicut totum ei debent universi, sic singuli; nisi quod prope hoc plus singuli quam universi, quod totum acceperunt singuli, quantum universi. *Salvian.*

† Si audiat multitudo silens, non inter se particulatim comminuunt sonos, tanquam cibos: sed omne quod sonat & omnibus totum est, & singulis totum. *August. in Ep. ad. Volusen.*

felicity. There is no satiety of the present, no solicitude for the future. Were there a possibility, or the least suspicion of losing that happy state, it would cast an asperaion of bitterness upon all their delights; it would disturb their peaceful fruition, and joyful tranquillity: as hope in misery allays sorrow, so fear in happiness dashes joy: and the more excellent the happiness is, the more stinging would be the fear of losing it. "But the inheritance reserved in heaven, is immortal, undefiled, and fades not away." And the tenure of their possession is infinitely firm, by the promise of God, who is truly immutable, and immutably true, and by the divine power, the support of their everlasting duration. Our Saviour assures his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also: and he lives for evermore." This blessed privilege the saints have by Jesus Christ (who obtained eternal redemption for them) above the grace given to angels and men in the first creation. The angels were upon trial of their obedience, not in a determined state of felicity. The first declination of love and subjection, was fatal to them. Woful change! how unlike to themselves in their original purity and glory! an unparalleled example of the frailty of the creature, and the divine severity. Man did stand in paradise for a little while, and had a ruinous fall with all his progeny. "But the glorified saints sit with Christ in heavenly places," and enjoy an unchangeable happiness, as permanent as the everlasting author of it, and the everlasting soul the subject of it. "With God is the fountain of life." Who can pluck them out of the hands and bosom of a gracious God? He will never withdraw his love, and they shall never forfeit it: for sin is from the perverseness of the will and the disorder of the affections, joined with some error of the mind. But in the light of glory, and full enjoyment of God, the understanding is so perfectly illuminated, the will and affections so exceedingly satisfied, that it is impossible they should apprehend erroneously, or desire irregularly. God is love, and will kindle in the saints a pure affection that eternity shall not lessen. In the present state, our love is imperfect; and as fire out of its sphere dies away by our neglect to feed it by proper materials, enamouring considerations of God. But in heaven the uncreated sun attracts every eye with the light of his beauty, and inflames every heart with the heat of his love. The glorious presence of God is in different respects the cause and effect of our

love to him; for the sight of God is the most powerful attractive to love him, and love fixes the mind upon him. And the persevering love of God assures the constant fruition of him: for by love the supreme good is possessed and enjoyed. The apostle tells us, "charity never fails," and therefore the happiness of heaven never fails. They enjoy a better immortality, than the tree of life could have preserved in Adam. The revolutions of the heavens, and ages, are under their feet, and cannot in the least alter or determine their happiness. After the passing of millions of years, still an entire eternity remains of their enjoying God. O most desirable state! where blessedness and eternity are inseparably united. O joyful harmony! when the full chorus of heaven shall sing, "this God is our God for ever and ever." This adds an infinite weight to their glory. This redoubles their joys with infinite sweetness and security: for the direct pleasure of enjoying God, is attended with the pleasant reflection it shall continue for ever. They repose themselves in the complete fruition of their happiness. God reigns in the saints, and they live in him for ever. Eternity crowns and consummates their felicity.

THE APPLICATION.

From what has been discoursed we should,

1. Consider the woful folly of men in refusing such a happiness, that by the admirable favour of God is offered to their choice. Can there be an expectation, or desire, or capacity in man of enjoying a happiness beyond what is infinite and eternal? O blind and wretched world! so careless of everlasting felicity. Who can behold without compassion and indignation, men vainly seeking for happiness where it is not to be found, and after innumerable disappointments flying at an impossibility, and neglect their sovereign and final blessedness? An error in the first inquiry might have some colour of an excuse; but having been so often deceived with painted grapes for the fruits of paradise, that men should still seek for substantial blessedness to fill the soul, in vain shows that can only feed the eye, is beyond all degrees of folly. Astonishing madness! that God and heaven should be despised in comparison of painted trifles. This adds

the greatest contumely to their impiety. What powerful charm obstructs their true judging of things? What spirit of error possesses them? Alas, "eternal things are unseen!" not of conspicuous moment, and therefore in the carnal balance are esteemed light, against temporal things present to the sense. "It does not appear what we shall be:" the veil of the visible heavens covers the sanctuary, where JESUS our high-priest is entered, and stops the inquiring eye.

But have we not assurance by the most infallible principles of faith, that the Son of God came down from heaven to live with us, and die for us, and that he rose again to confirm our belief in his "exceeding great and precious promises" concerning this happiness in the future state? And do not the most evident principles of reason and universal experience prove, that this world cannot afford true happiness to us? How wretchedly do we forfeit the prerogative of the reasonable nature, by neglecting our last and blessed end? If the mind be darkened, that it does not see the amiable excellencies of God, and the will be depraved, that it does not feel their ravishing power; the man ceases to be a man, and becomes like the beasts that perish. As a blind eye is no longer an eye, being absolutely useless to that end for which it was made. And though in this present state, men are stupid and unconcerned, yet hereafter their misery will awaken them, to discover what is that supreme good wherein their perfection and felicity consists. When their folly shall be exposed before God, angels, and saints, in what extreme confusion will they appear before that glorious and immense theatre? Our Saviour told the unbelieving Jews, "There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves turned out." They shall be tortured with the desire of happiness without possible satisfaction. It is most just that those who err without excuse, should repent without remedy.

Let us be seriously excited to apply ourselves with inflamed desires, and our utmost diligence to obtain this unchangeable happiness. In order to this, we shall consider the causes of it, and the means whereby it is obtained.

The original moving cause is the pure rich mercy of God that

prepared it for his people, and prepares them for it. The procuring cause is the meritorious efficacy of Christ's obedience and sufferings. This is expressly declared by the apostle; "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

i. The designing, the preparation, and actual bestowing of the heavenly glory, is from the mercy of God. This will appear by considering,

1. That it is absolutely impossible that a mere creature, though perfect, should deserve any thing from God: for enjoying its being and powers of working from his goodness, the product of all is entirely due to him; and the payment of a debt acquires no title to a reward: he is the proprietary and Lord of all by creation. Hence it is clear, that in the order of distributive justice nothing can be challenged from him.

2. Besides, such is the infinite perfection of God in himself, that no benefit can redound to him by the service of the creature. "When you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants, for we have done but what we ought to do." The neglect of our duty justly exposes to punishment; but the performance of it deserves no reward, because no advantage accrues to God by it. "Who hath first given unto him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" He challenges all creatures, even of the highest order. To speak strictly therefore, when God crowns the angels with glory, he gives what is merely his own, and does not render what is theirs. If he should leave them in their pure nature, or deprive them of their being, he were no loser, nor injurious to them. For what law binds him to enrich them with immortal glory, who are no ways profitable to him, or to preserve that being they had from his unexcited goodness? No creature can give to him, therefore none can receive from him, by way of valuable consideration.

3. There is no proportion between the best works of men, and the excellency of the reward, much less an equivalence. It was the just and humble acknowledgment of Jacob to God, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies," those that common providence dispenses for the support and refreshment of this temporal life. But how much less than the glorious excellencies of the supernatural divine life, wherein the saints reign with God for ever? The most costly, the most difficult and hazardous

services, are equally nothing in point of merit, with the giving but "a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ," there being no correspondence in value between them and the kingdom of heaven. The apostle tells us, "I count the sufferings of this present life are not to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us:" and suffering is more than doing. God rewards his faithful servants, not according to the dignity of their works, but his own liberality and munificence. As Alexander having ordered fifty talents of gold to be given to a gentleman in poverty to supply his want: and he surprised with that immense bounty, modestly said, ten were enough; he replied, 'if fifty are too much for you to receive, ten are too little for me to give; therefore do you receive as poor, I will give as a king." Thus God in the dispensing his favours does not respect the meanness of our persons or services, but gives to us as a God. And the clearest notion of the Deity is, that he is a being infinite in all perfections, therefore all-sufficient and most willing to make his creatures completely happy.

4. If a creature perfectly holy, that never sinned, is incapable to merit any thing from God, much less can those who are born in a sinful state, and guilty of innumerable actual transgressions, pretend to deserve any reward for their works. This were presumption inspired by prodigious vanity. For,

(1.) By his most free grace they are restored in conversion to that spiritual power by which they serve him. The chaos was not a deader lump before the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, than the best of men were before the vital influences of the Spirit wrought upon them. And for this they are so deeply obliged to God, that if a thousand times more for his glory were performed, yet they cannot discharge what they owe.

(2.) The continuance and increase of the powerful supplies of grace to the saints, who even since their holy calling by many lapses have justly deserved that God should withdraw his grieved Spirit, are new obligations to thankfulness: and the more grace, the less merit.

(3.) The best works of men are imperfect, allayed with the mixtures of infirmities, and not of full weight in the divine balance. If God should strictly examine our righteousness, it will be found neither pure nor perfect in his eyes, and without favour

and indulgence would be rejected. And that which wants pardon, cannot deserve praise and glory. "He shows mercy to thousands that love him, and keep his commandments." If obedience were meritorious, it were strict justice to reward them. The apostle prays for Onesiphorus, who had exposed himself to great danger for his love to the gospel; "the Lord grant he may find mercy in that day." The divine mercy gives the crown of life to the faithful in the day of eternal recompence.

ii. The meritorious cause of our obtaining heaven, is the obedience of Jesus Christ, comprehending all that he did and suffered to reconcile God to us. From him as the Eternal Word we have all benefits in the order of nature; "for all things were made by him," and for him, as the incarnate Word, all good things in the order of grace. What we enjoy in time, and expect in eternity, is by him. To show what influence his mediation has to make us happy, we must consider;

1. Man by his rebellion justly forfeited his happiness, and the law exacts precisely the forfeiture. Pure justice requires the crime should be punished according to its quality, much less will it suffer the guilty to enjoy the favour of God: for sin is not to be considered as an offence and injury to a private person, but the violation of a law, and a disturbance in the order of government: so that to preserve the honour of governing justice, an equivalent reparation was appointed. Till sin was expiated by a proper sacrifice, the divine goodness was a sealed spring, and its blessed effects restrained from the guilty creature. Now the Son of God in our assumed nature offered up himself a sacrifice in our stead, to satisfy divine justice, and removed the bar, that mercy might be glorified in our salvation. The apostle gives this account of it; "we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Christ, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Heb. 10. 19, 20.

2. Such were the most precious merits of his obedience, that it was not only sufficient to free the guilty contaminated race of mankind from hell, but to purchase for them the kingdom of heaven. If we consider his human nature, all graces were born with him, as rays with the sun, and shined in the whole course of his life in the excellence of perfection. And the dignity of

his divine person derived an immense value to all he performed as Mediator. One act of his obedience was more honourable to God, than all the lives of the saints, the deaths of the martyrs, and the service of the angels. God was more pleased in the obedience of his beloved Son, than he was provoked by the rebellion of his servants. Therefore, as the just recompence of it, he constituted him to be universal Head of the church, supreme Judge of the world; invested him with divine glory, and with power to communicate it to his faithful servants: "he is the Prince of life." In short, it is as much upon the account of Christ's sufferings that we are glorified, as that we are forgiven. The wounds he received in his body, the characters of ignominy, and footsteps of death, are the fountains of our glory. His abasement is the cause of our exaltation.

If it be said, this seems to lessen the freeness of this gift. The answer is clear:

This was due to Christ, but undeserved by us. Besides, the appointing his Son to be our Mediator in the way of our ransom, was the most glorious work of his goodness.

CHAP. VIII.

The gospel requires qualifications in all that shall obtain the kingdom of heaven. The renovation of man according to the likeness of God, is indispensably requisite for the enjoying of God, Renewing grace described. The wisdom and justice of God require that men be sanctified before they are admitted into heaven. Without sanctification, there is a moral incapacity of enjoying the beatific vision.

THE means of our obtaining heaven are to be considered. Though the divine goodness be free in its acts, and there can be nothing in the creature of merit, or inducement to prevail upon God in the nature of a cause, yet he requires qualifications in all those who shall enjoy that blessed unchangeable kingdom. The apostle expressly declares, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. 9. 16. But we must distinguish the effects of this mercy, which are dispensed in that order the gospel lays down. The first mercy is the powerful calling the sinner from his corrupt and wretched state; a second mercy is the pardoning his sins; the last and most eminent is the glorifying him in heaven. Now it is clear, that in this place "the showing mercy," signifies the preventing grace of God in conversion; for in the 18th verse it is said, God shows mercy to "whom he will, and whom he will he hardens." Where it is evident that showing mercy is opposed not to condemning but to hardening; and consequently the intent of the words is this, that divine grace overcomes the rebellious will, softens the stiff and stubborn heart, and makes it pliant to obedience. This flows from his pure good will and pleasure, without the least motive from the inclinations or endeavours of sinful men. But the other effects of God's mercy require conditions in the subjects that receive them: for he pardons only penitent believers, and glorifies none but persevering saints.

To make this clear, it is worthy of observation, the gospel has several denominations. 1. It is called "a law, a covenant,"

and "a testament." Rom. 3. 27. It is called "the law of faith," and "the law of the spritual life." As a law, it signifies a new right that God has most freely established in favour of lost man, that commands certain duties, and sets before them eternal life as the reward of obedience, and eternal death the punishment of disobedience. According to this the trial and decision of men's everlasting states shall be, which is the character of a true law. This law of grace is very different from the law of nature, that required entire innocence, and for the least omission, or accusing act, passed an irrevocable doom upon the offenders; for that strictness and severity is mollified by the gospel, which accepts of sincere persevering obedience though imperfect; accordingly it is called "the law of liberty." James 2. But "the law of faith" is unalterable, and admits of no dispensation from the duties required in order to our being everlastingly happy.

2. The gospel is styled "a covenant," and that imports a reciprocal engagement between parties for the performance of the matter contained in it. The covenant of grace includes the promise of pardoning and rewarding mercy on God's part, and the conditions on man's, with respect to which it is to be performed. There is an inviolable dependance between them. He will be "our God," to make us happy, "but we must be his people to yield unreserved obedience to him." Heb. 9. "He will be our Father, and we shall be his sons and daughters;" but it is upon the terms of "purifying ourselves from all pollutions of the flesh and spirit," and unfeigned endeavours to "perfect holiness in his fear." 2 Cor. 7. It is astonishing goodness, that he is pleased to condescend to such a treaty with fallen creatures: by a voluntary promise he encourages them; but though most free in making, it is conditional in the performance. The constancy of his holy nature obliges him to fulfil his word, but it is if we do not fail on our part by carelessness of our duty. A presumer may seal assurance to himself, and be deceived in this great matter; but "God will not be mocked." If we prove false in the covenant, he will be faithful, and exclude those from heaven that were neglectful of the conditions to which it is promised.

3. The gospel is styled, "a testament" sealed in the blood of Christ, confirmed by his death. The donation of eternal bles-

sings in it, is not absolute and irrespective, but the heirs are admitted to the possession of the inheritance according to the will of the rich, liberal, and wise Testator. There can be no regular title or claim made out without performing what is required. And this "is the will of God and Christ, our sanctification," without which we cannot enjoy it.

Now from hence we may see the admirable agreement between these two notions, that heaven is a gift, and a reward. It is a reward in the order of giving it, not due to the work, but from the bounty of the giver. God gives heaven to those that faithfully serve him. But their service was due to God, of no worth in respect of heaven; so that man's work is no merit, and God's reward is a gift. Our everlasting glory must be ascribed to his most free grace, as much as the pardon of our sins.

I shall now proceed to consider, what the gospel declares to be indispensably requisite in order to our obtaining heaven: this is comprised in the holy change of man's nature, which I will briefly unfold, and show how necessary it is to qualify us for celestial glory.

1. This holy change is expressed in scripture by the new birth. Our Saviour, with a solemn repeated asservation, tells Nicodemus; "verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3. 3. Sin is natural to man from his conception and birth, and infects with its contagion all his faculties. This is fomented and cherished by temptations that easily encompass him. The understanding is polluted with evil principles, full of strong prejudices, and lofty imaginations against the supernatural mysteries of salvation. It is full of ignorance and folly, and from hence either rejects them as incredible, or despises them as impertinent or unprofitable. The will is depraved and perverse, full of unruly and unhallowed affections. The senses are luxurious and rebellious. In short, man is so viciously and sensually inclined, so "alienated from the life of God," as if he had no diviner part within him, that should aspire to a spiritual blessedness, that should regulate and control the excess of the inferior appetites. This is the unhappy character satan impressed on him in his fall, and without renovation upon an infinite account he is incapable of seeing God. This renovation consists not in the change of his substance, as

the water was miraculously turned into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee: the same soul with its essential powers, the same body with its natural senses, the work of the Creator, remains; but in the cleansing of his stained nature, in the sanctifying his faculties that are the springs of his actions, the whole man is quickened into a divine life, and enabled to act in conformity to it. And of this the new birth is a convenient illustration. An active principle of holiness is planted in him, that springs up into visible actions. The apostle particularly expresses it in his earnest prayer for the Thessalonians, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and preserve your whole spirit, soul and body blameless, till the coming of Jesus Christ." Every faculty is renewed, and every grace infused that constitutes the divine image. The mind is renewed by spiritual light, to believe the truth and goodness of unseen things promised, the reality and dreadfulness of things threatened in the word of God. It sees the truest beauty in holiness, the highest honour in obedience to God, the greatest equity and excellence in his service. The will is renewed by holy love, a purifying flame, and feels the attractive virtue of our blessed end before all desirable things on earth, and determines to pursue it in the vigorous use of proper means. The body is made a holy instrument fit for the renewed soul. In short, the natural man becomes spiritual in his perceptions, resolutions and actions. "All things are become new." There is a firm assent, an inviolable adherence to those most precious objects revealed in the scripture, and a sincere chosen constant obedience flows from the renewed faculties. And from hence we may distinguish between regenerating grace, and formal hypocrisy in some, and the proficiency of nature and power of common grace in others. A hypocrite in religion is actuated from without, by mercenary base respects; and his conscience being cauterized, handles sacred things without feeling: a regenerate person is moved by an internal living principle, and performs his duties with lively affections. Natural conscience under the compulsion of fear, may lay a restraint upon the outward acts of sin, without an inward consent to the sanctity of the law. Renewing grace cleanses the fountain, and the current is pure. It reconciles the affections to the most holy commands. "I love thy law because it is pure," saith the psalmist.

A moral principle may induce one to abstain from many sins, and to perform many praiseworthy things in conformity to reason. But this is neither sanctifying nor saving; for it only prunes sin as if it were a good plant, and does not root it up; it compounds with it, and does not destroy it. There may be still an impure indulgence to the secret lustings of the heart, notwithstanding the restraint upon their exercise. And many duties may be done on lower motives, without a divine respect to the commands and glory of God.

But renewing grace subjects the soul to the whole royalty of the law, uniformly inclines it to express obedience to all its precepts, because they are pure, and derived from the eternal spring of purity. It mortifies concupiscence, and quickens to every good work, from a principle of love to God, and in this is distinguished from the most refined unregenerate morality. In short, there may be a superficial tincture of religion from common grace, a transient esteem, vanishing affections, and earnest endeavours for a time after spiritual things, and yet a person remain in a state of unregeneracy. But renewing grace is a permanent solid principle, that makes a man partaker of the divine nature, and elevates him above himself.

This holy change is wrought by divine power. Our Saviour tells Nicodemus, "except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The analogy of a new birth signifies, that it is entirely the work of the sanctifying spirit, that conveys a principle of life in order to the functions of it. It is the living impression of God, the sole efficient and exemplar of it, the fruit and image of the divine virtues. It is expressed by the new creature. The production of it is attributed to God's power displaying itself in a peculiar excellent way, even in that precise manner, as in making the world. For as in the first creation all things were made originally of nothing, so in the second, the habit of grace is infused into the soul that was utterly void of it, and in which there was as little preparation for true holiness, as of nothing to produce this great and regular world. And although there is not only an absolute privation of grace, but a fierce resistance against it, yet creating invincible power does as infallibly and certainly produce its effect in forming the new creature, as in making the world. From hence it appears that preventing renewing grace is so entirely the

work of God, as his forming the human body from the dust of earth at first; but with this difference, the first creation was done without any sense in the subject, of the efficiency of the divine power in producing it: but in the new creation, man feels the vital influence of the Spirit, applying itself to all his faculties, reforming and enabling them to act according to the quality of their nature.

And by the way, we may observe the admirable grace showed to man in the renovation of his corrupted nature. In the composition of his being are united a spirit like the angels, and a body like terrestrial animals, by which he partakes of the spiritual and natural life: but he has peculiar favours conferred upon him. For, whereas his soul sinned with the angels, and his body dies with the beasts, yet God is pleased to restore them by his glorious power. An angel after sin never repents, and is therefore incapable of pardon, and irrecoverably disinherited of heaven: a beast after death never revives; but though man sins and dies, yet his soul may be renewed by divine grace, and his body shall be raised in an incorruptible glory.

2. Now the indispensable necessity of this holy change is evident from the words of our Saviour, for he speaks universally, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He does not simply declare that an unregenerate man shall not, but with the greatest emphasis, cannot, to signify an absolute impossibility of it. The Jews highly presumed of the privilege of their carnal birth, they sprang from the pure and noble blood of Abraham, God's friend; they had the seal of the holy covenant marked in their flesh: and hence it was proverbial amongst them, that every Israelite should have a part in the world to come. But our Saviour overthrows this vain conceit, and tells them, that the supernatural birth entitles to the supernatural inheritance. Circumcision then, and baptism now, without real grace, is an ineffectual sign, of no avail to salvation. In the quality of sons, we are heirs of God's kingdom, Rom. 8. 17. And that honourable relation we have upon a double account, by adoption and regeneration, Gal. 4. 7. Divine adoption is not a mere change of our state, a naked declaration that one shall be dignified with the title of God's Son; but a holy nature is always infused into the person, whereby he is made like to God in his excellencies. In this it differs from human adoption, that gives

the name and arms, the honour and estate of the adopter to a person, without conveying any of his intellectual or moral endowments. Whom God adopts, he begets to a divine life. Besides, our Saviour purchased this high privilege for us: "God sent his Son made of a woman, under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons:" by union with him we receive the investiture of this dignity. "Now whoever is in Christ, is a new creature." For the quickening spirit, that is to the soul what the soul is to the body, the principle of life and strength, of beauty and motion, and an active purifying faith that is influential upon all other graces, are the band of that vital union: so that as all in Adam are universally corrupt by the first birth, all that are in Christ are made holy by a new birth. But of this I shall speak in the next chapter more fully, under a distinct head. Briefly, the spirit of grace that sanctifies, is the spirit of adoption that seals our right to that kingdom.

Now the reasons why this change must be in order to our obtaining of heaven, are these:

1. There is an exquisite wisdom shines in all God's works, in disposing them for the ends to which they are appointed: and is it not monstrously absurd to imagine, he will admit into his presence and kingdom those that are absolutely unqualified for its blessedness, and opposite to its purity?

2. His invariable justice excludes for ever all unholy persons from heaven. For in the last judgment God will be glorified as a governor, in the distribution of rewards with respect to the obedience and disobedience of men. It is worthy of observation, that the actions of God on the reasonable creatures are of two sorts. Some proceed from his sovereign good pleasure, of which there is no motive or reason in the subjects on which they are terminated. Thus by a free and insuperable decree (when all mankind, lapsed and miserable, was in his view) he chose some to be "vessels of mercy," and by privilege separated them from the rest that finally perish. Now what induced him to place a singular love on the elect? There was nothing in them to incline his compassion, being equally guilty and depraved with the rest of the progeny of Adam. This difference therefore is to be resolved into his unaccountable and adorable will, as the sole cause of it. Thus God declares it to be his glorious prerogative, "I

will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And this is no unjust acceptance of persons: for as a benefactor, he may dispense his own favours as he pleases. A gift from mere and arbitrary bounty may be bestowed on some, and not on others, without injustice. But there are other actions of God for which there is an evident reason in men on whom they are terminated. Thus, as the supreme Judge, "without respect of persons," 1 Pet. 1, 17. he will judge and reward "every man according to his works," Rom. 2. 16. Acts 26. 18. The evangelical law (as was touched on before) is the rule of eternal judgment, and gives a right from the gracious promise of God to all penitent believers in the kingdom of heaven, and excludes all impenitent infidels. Divine justice will illustriously appear then, in distinguishing believers from unbelievers by their works, the proper fruits either of faith or infidelity: all the thick clouds of disgraces, calumnies, persecutions, that often oppress the most sincere christians here, shall not then darken their holiness; and all the specious appearances of piety, which the most artificial hypocrites make use of to deceive others, shall not conceal their wickedness. And accordingly the one shall be absolved and glorified, the others condemned and punished for ever. In short, without violation of his own righteous establishment in the gospel, God cannot receive the unholy into his glory, Heb. 12. 14.

9. Besides the legal bar that excludes unsanctified persons from the beatific vision of God, there is a moral incapacity. Suppose that justice should allow omnipotence to translate such a sinner to heaven, would the place make him happy? Can two incongruous natures delight in one another? The happiness of sense is by an impression of pleasure from a suitable object: the happiness of intellectual beings arises from an entire conformity of dispositions. So that unless God recede from his holiness, which is absolutely impossible, or man be purified, and changed into his likeness, there can be no sweet communion between them. Our Saviour assigns this reason of the necessity of regeneration in order to our admission into heaven: "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. According to the quality of the principle, such is what proceeds from it. The flesh is a corrupt principle, and accordingly the natural man is wholly carnal in his propensions, operations and

end. The disease is turned into his constitution. He is dead to the spiritual life, to the actions and enjoyments that are proper to it: nay, there is in him a surviving principle of enmity to that life; not only a mortal coldness to God, but a stiff aversation from him, a perpetual resistance and impatience of the divine presence, that would disturb his voluptuous enjoyments. The exercises of heaven would be as the torments of hell to him, while in the midst of those pure joys his inward inclinations vehemently run into the lowest lees of sensuality. And therefore till this contrariety, so deep and predominant in an unholy person, be removed, it is utterly impossible he should enjoy God with satisfaction. As it was necessary that God should become like man on earth, to purchase that felicity for him, so man must be like God in heaven before he can possess it. Holiness alone prepares men for celestial happiness; that is against the corruption, and above the perfection of mere nature.

I shall now proceed to consider more particularly what is requisite in order to our obtaining of heaven.

CHAP. IX.

Faith in the Redeemer is indispensably required of all that will partake of salvation. Heaven must be chosen as our supreme happiness, and sought as our last end. The choice of heaven must be sincere, early, firm and constant. The sincerity of the choice discovered by the zealous use of means to obtain it. The sincerity of the choice will regulate our judgments and affections, with respect to temporal things that are so far good or evil to us, as they conduct or divert us from heaven. The sincere choice of heaven will make us aspire to the highest degrees of holiness we are capable of in the present state. The vanity of the hopes of the lukewarm in religion discovered.

1. FAITH in the Redeemer is absolutely required of all that will partake of the salvation purchased by him. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have eternal life, John 3. 16. This is the spirit and substance of the gospel, therefore I will briefly unfold it. The Son of God having assumed the human nature, and performed what was necessary for the expiation of sin, Phil. 2. 8, 9. the Father was so pleased with his obedience, that from his lowest state he raised him to divine glory, and gave him supreme authority, and all-sufficient power to communicate that glory to others. Thus our Saviour declares; "thou hast given him (i. e. the Son) power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him," John 17. 2. And he exhorts the people, "labor for that meat that endures unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed." John 6. Now this glorious life is not given to all, but only to those who are united to him. As Adam, the principle of the carnal corrupt nature, derives guilt and death to all his progeny: so Jesus Christ (who is opposed to him) the head and prince of the renewed state, communicates life and glory to his people. The apostle expresses it, "as in Adam all die" (his natural descendants are involved in his condemnation) "even so in Christ shall all be made alive," 1 Cor.

15. 22. that is, all that are spiritually united to him, shall partake of his glorious resurrection. And St. John tells us, "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life, 1 John 5. 12. The having the Son, upon which our right to eternal life depends, is believing in him. Faith has a principal efficiency in receiving Christ; therefore it is expressed by that act, "but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God," John 1. 12. (and consequently heirs of glory) to as many "as believed on his name." And Christ is said "to dwell in our hearts by faith," Ephes. 3. 17. This is not a mere assent to the doctrines of the gospel concerning the dignity of his person, that he is in so high and glorious a relation of being the eternal Son of God, and the infinite value of his merits, whereby he is able to save all that come unto God by him, and his merciful compassionate nature to embrace returning sinners, and the excellency of the benefits purchased by him, but such a belief as sways the will and affections to receive him upon God's terms for our salvation. Faith is seated in the whole soul, in the mind and heart, and accepts of Christ entirely as Prophet, Priest, and King. The parts of the Mediator's office are inseparably connected, and all the effects of them are communicated to the same persons. "Jesus Christ is made of God to believers, wisdom," to cure their ignorance and folly; "righteousness," to abolish their guilt; "sanctification," to renew their natures; and "redemption," to free them at last from the grave, and bring them to glory, 1 Cor. 1. From hence it is clear, that the faith which is justifying and saving, includes in its nature, a dependance and trust in Christ as a powerful and merciful Mediator, that is able and willing to reconcile us to God, and make us for ever happy in his favour; so a sincere resolution of obedience and subjection to all his holy commands, even to the plucking out of the right eye, and the cutting off the right hand, the parting with the most pleasing or profitable sins. For the promises of God that are the rule of faith, make an offer of Christ upon these conditions to us: "him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, Acts 5. 31. And only "the justified shall be glorified. Rom. 8. Those therefore who desire a partial interest in him as a Saviour, out of absolute necessity to escape hell, and will not out of love submit to him

as their prince, have not "that faith that is unfeigned," and gives a title to eternal life by the promises of the gospel.

2. We must choose heaven as our supreme happiness, and regard it as the main end of our lives. Man fell from his duty and felicity by preferring sensual pleasure before the favour of God, and became guilty of the greatest disobedience and dishonour to his Maker, and is restored by the holy change of his will, the setting his affections on a pure spiritual blessedness. This subliming the will, and turning its love and choice from the creatures to God, is the effect of divine grace, and wrought in a rational way. For man is not moved as artificial engines by force, nor as brutes from necessity, their faculties being determined by the outward application of objects: he is not drawn up to heaven by such a natural impression, as steel by the loadstone, nor forced by a violent motion as a stone ascends, but as an understanding free agent, by the direction of the enlightened mind, and the consent of the will, an elective unconstrained faculty. And herein the wisdom, goodness and equity of God's transactions with man appear. His wisdom, in that as he has ordered in the whole sphere of nature, that the active powers of every creature be drawn forth into exercise for their preservation, and accordingly he is pleased to work in and by them; so the understanding and will, the principles of operation in man, are to deliberate and choose in order to his happiness: otherwise the rational faculties would be in vain. His goodness and equity, in that he sets before them eternal life as the reward of obedience. God will be glorified by him as a law-giver and a benefactor, and has ordained in the gospel that all who choose and diligently seek the kingdom of heaven, shall infallibly obtain it, and none be deprived of it but for their neglect. The decree of a final state of misery, though not in time, yet is consequent in the order of causes to the obstinate reluctancy of sinners against restoring grace, and the wilful forsaking their own mercies. Therefore God vindicates the equity of his proceedings with men by their own principles, and with tender pity expostulates, "why will ye die?" The corrupt will, declining from God, and adhering to the creature as its happiness, is the true cause of man's ruin. This will infinitely clear the wisdom and justice, the purity and goodness of God from all imputation.

The choice of heaven for our felicity is primarily to be deter-

mined, for it is from the prospect of it that all holy counsels derive their life and vigour. As in drawing the picture of a man, the first work is to delineate the head, not only as the part that in dignity and eminence is above the rest, but as it regulates the drawing of the other parts, and gives a just proportion and correspondence between them, without which the whole figure becomes disordered and monstrous. Thus in the moral consideration of man, that which is primarily to be considered is the soul, and its final felicity, as incomparably more excellent than the body and its pleasures: for this will have a powerful influence upon the whole life, directing to avoid what is inconsistent and impertinent, and to do what is conducive to it.

Now this being a matter of unspeakable importance, I will,

i. Show what the regular choice of heaven includes, as to its qualities and effects.

ii. Direct how to make this choice.

iii. Present some powerful motives to excite us to it.

i. The qualities of this choice are three.

1. It must be sincere and cordial.

2. Early, in our first and best days.

3. Firm and constant.

1. It must be sincere and cordial. The most essential and active desire in human nature is to happiness; but there being two kinds of good things presented to the will that solicit the affections, the pleasures of sense, and spiritual joys, from hence it is that that which makes men happy is the object of election. And although there is nothing more uniform and inviolable than the natural inclination to happiness, yet the great distinction of mankind arises from this source, the regular or perverse use of this inclination, the wise or mistaken choice of happiness. Now the sincerity of our choice is discovered, when it is clear and entire, arising from a transcendent esteem of the favour and enjoyment of God as our chief good, and absolutely requisite for us. And from hence it is evident that the choice of true happiness, necessarily includes the despising and rejecting of the false happiness that stands in competition with it. There cannot be two reigning principles in the soul: for it cannot vigorously apply itself to two objects at the same time. Our Saviour has decided it, "no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or hold to the one and despise the other:

ye cannot serve God and mammon." The masters are irreconcileable, and their commands are directly opposite. It was as possible to place upon the same altar the ark of God, and the idol of the Philistines, as that heaven and the world should compound and take equal shares in our affections. Indeed, if the conceptions in the mind are but faint and floating of the universal satisfying goodness of the object proposed to make us happy, the will remains in suspense; but when it is clearly and strongly represented, the heart is drawn entirely to embrace it. Divine grace by the illumination of the understanding, purifies and changes the depraved will, and heals the distempered affections. The wise merchant, that had a discerning eye, saw reason enough to part with all, that he might gain the "pearl of price," the grace and glory of the kingdom of heaven. The apostle declares his resolute contempt of the concurrence of all the prerogatives either the law or the world could afford him, that he might have an interest in Christ, the Reconciler and Restorer of man to the favour and fellowship of God. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I might win Christ." The glorious gospel is the brightest and most pleasant light that ever shone upon the world, a revelation of the deepest wisdom and most admirable love, wherein the combination of God's holy and wonderful counsels for our salvation is unfolded; and accordingly St. Paul, with the greatest life of affection, sets forth his value of it, and by full and most vilifying expressions, rejects all things in comparison of it.

2. The sincerity of the heavenly choice, is discovered by a zealous observance of the means requisite in order to it. Inanimate things incline to rest in their centre, the rational intend and pursue it. The blessed end, when valued and respected according to its worth, excites and directs the affections and endeavours in that order and measure as is proportionable to its excellency, and the difficulties of obtaining it. There may be a naked estimation, and some desires of eternal happiness simply considered, yet the will remains incomplete and undetermined in its choice: for the end in conjunction with the means is propounded to us, and the carnal man will not consent to the

means. He dislikes the holiness of religion, and will rather forfeit heaven than submit to such strict terms. Though with Balaam, in a fit of devotion, he says, "O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his;" yet from indulgence to his sensual inclinations, he will not live as the righteous. All his wishes of true happiness are soon strangled by the predominant love of some vanity. It is said of the Israelites, "they despised the pleasant land," Psal. 106. 14. not absolutely in itself, for it was "the glory of all lands" abounding with things for the support and delight of man; but considering its distance, a wilderness waste and wild interposing, and the enemies to be encountered, they did not think it worthy of undergoing such hazards and difficulties. The land of Canaan was a type of heaven, both with respect to its pleasantness, and the manner of the Israelites obtaining it. Their title to it was from the rich bounty of God, therefore it is called the "Land of Promise;" but it was to be possessed by conquest. Thus the celestial Canaan is the pure gift of God, but the actual enjoyment of it is obtained by victorious resistance against the enemies of our salvation. And carnal men despise this pleasant land, the promise being inseparably joined with precepts of duty and obedience, from which they are averse. But he that chooses sincerely, is joyful and vigorous in the use of means for acquiring his most desired good. Ardent affections, like Elijah's chariot of fire, ravish the soul above this sensible world, to the place where God dwells in glory. Zeal animates his endeavours, as the motion of the heart diffuses the spirits into the arteries, to convey life to all parts of the body. "One thing (saith the inflamed psalmist) have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The sensual man is ranging abroad for satisfaction, and shoots all the game that crosses his eye; but the soul that has a discovering light, and feeling heat of the divine beauty, unites all its desires in God, and with affection to an ecstacy, longs for the enjoyment of him; and the endeavours are in some proportion to the desires. Our Saviour tells us, "That from the days of John the baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Some previous rays of the Sun of

Righteousness appeared in his ministry, and produced such a holy ardency in those converts, that with all resolution, diligence and earnestness, they sought to be partakers of the blessedness revealed. Lazy desires, easy prosecutions, sluggish attempts, discover that the heart is not throughly engaged for the spiritual eternal good. When the end is truly designed, it will give law to the actions. This is visible in carnal worldly men, how sagacious, how solicitous are they to accomplish their ends and base designs? They try all ways, either by fine dissimulation, or toilsome industry, to obtain their desires. No time is too much in their gainful affairs, or voluptuous enjoyments. They transform the night to lengthen out the day for their profit, they veil the day to lengthen out the night for their ease and pleasure. But, alas, heaven is only regarded by the bye; as if the intellectual soul were only given to dwell with the body on earth, the place of its banishment, and direct affairs here below, and not to lead in the way to heaven, the place of its nativity, and prepare for another world. The work of salvation is followed with that remiss degree of affection, as if it were a slight matter whether performed or neglected. These persons carry their conviction in their bosoms; for they are ardent and active to obtain inferior and infinitely less concerning ends, but with that cold application mind the superior nobler end of man, that it is wholly frustrate, which plainly shows it was never seriously intended by them.

The sight of worldly men so active and vigilant to prosecute their low designs, should quicken us to seek with greater diligence and alacrity the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof. A carnal wretch, urged by the sting of a brutish desire, with what impatience doth he pursue "the pleasures of sin that are but for a season?" An ambitious person, with what an intemperate height of passion does he chase a feather? A covetous man, how greedily does he pursue the advantages of "the present world that passes away, and the lusts thereof." Ah! how do they upbraid our indifferent desires, our dull delays and cold endeavours, when such a high prize is set before us? Who is able to conceive the ravishing pleasures of the soul when it first enters through "the beautiful gate" of the celestial temple, and sees the glory of the place, and "hears a voice from the

throne, enter into thy master's joy," to be happy with him for ever? The serious belief of this will draw forth all our active powers in the service of God.

3. The sincerity of our heavenly choice declares itself in the temper and frame of our hearts, with respect to all temporal things in this world. For our main and happy end being established, that it consists not in secular riches and honours, and the pleasures of sense, but in the clear vision of God, the blessedness of the Spirit; it follows that all present things are in our use so far good or evil, and to be desired or not, as they are profitable or prejudicial to our obtaining salvation, as they conduct or divert us from heaven. A wise christian looks on temporal things not through the glass of disordered passions, that are impetuous and impatient for what is grateful to them, but with reference to his future happiness. He considers the train of temptations that attend an exalted condition, and desires such a portion of these things, as may redound to the glory of the giver, and be improved for his own salvation. This purity of affections our Saviour teaches us: for in his divine form of prayer, the true directory of our desires, are set down in an admirable order all things we are to pray for. And they respect the end, or the means. The end is the primary object of our desires; accordingly the two first petitions concern our blessed end, as it respects God and ourselves. We pray, "Hallowed be thy name," that is, by the reverence and adoration of all his subjects: and, "Thy kingdom come," that is, for the manifestation of his eternal glory in the next world, that we may reign with him. The means in order to this end are of two sorts. Some conduct to it by themselves, those are the good things desired in the third and fourth petitions; and some lead to it by accident, and those are the freedom from evils expressed in the last petition. The good things desired, either have a direct influence upon our obtaining happiness; and they are summed up in our universal obedience to God's will, expressed in the third petition, "Let thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven:" or they are such as by way of subserviency promote our happiness, and these we pray for in the fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." And it is observable there is but one petition for temporal blessings, and it is the last in the order of those that concern good things. And that single petition is so restrained, that it is evident by its

tenour, that earthly things are not absolutely good to be desired for themselves, but relatively and subordinately to our eternal good. Daily bread we must ask of our heavenly Father, the necessary support of the present life, without which we cannot exercise our internal or external powers and faculties in his service; but not delicacies and abundance for the luxurious appetite.

The difference of conditions in the present world is very great: as in Pharaoh's dream, some ears of corn were so full and weighty, that they bended with their weight; others so thin and blasted, that they were as stubble for the fire. Thus some abound in all felicities possible in this life, others are "chastened every morning" under various and continual afflictions. Now this infallible principle being planted in the heart, that all present things are to be improved with respect to our future happiness, will moderate the affections in prosperity, so to use the world that we may enjoy God, and make us not only patient, but pleased in adversities, as they are preparatory for heaven.

The original of all the sins and misery of men, * is their perverse abuse of things, by turning the means into the end, setting their affections of love, desire, and joy upon sensible things, as their proper happiness, with inconsiderate neglect of the spiritual eternal state, to which all other things should be subservient. As if one diseased and sickly in a foreign country, that could not possibly recover health but in his native air, in his return thither, invited by the pleasantness of the way, should take up his residence in it, and never arrive to his own country. Among the West Indians some are † reported to be swift in running, that no horse can keep pace with them; and they have a constant rule in their diet, to eat of no beast, or bird or fish that is slow in motion, fancying it would transfuse a sluggishness in them. The christian life is by the apostle compared to a race, and earthly things by an inseparable property of nature load and depress the soul, that it cannot with vigour run the "Race set before it." The believer therefore who intends "for the high prize of his calling," and is true to his end, will "be temperate

* Frui est amore alicujus rei inhærere propter seipsam, uti autem, quod in usum venerit, ad id quod amas obtinendum referre. *Aug. de Doct. Christ.*

† Acosta.

in all things." Nay, he will not only be circumspect, lest they should check with his great design, but wisely manages them in subserviency to it. St. Paul "charges them that are rich in this world, to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life." 1 Tim. 6. 18, 19.

And the fixed aim at heaven, as our felicity, will reconcile an afflicted state to us. When temporal evils are effectual means to promote our everlasting happiness; the amiableness and excellency of the end changes their nature, and makes those calamities that in themselves are intolerable, to become light and easy. "The poor, the mourners, the persecuted are blessed now, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The apostle, though under variety of sharp troubles, yet expresses his sense with that mitigation, as but lightly touched with them: "as sorrowful, but always rejoicing." From hence he tells us, that with unfainting courage he prosecuted his glorious end. "For our light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory." This seriously believed and considered, will make us understand the harmony and consent of the most discordant parts of God's providence. This will reconcile the severity and roughness of his hand, with the tender compassions of his heart towards his servants. This will dry up rivers of unprofitable tears that flow from the afflicted, and make the cross of Christ a light burden. For their heaviest afflictions are not only consistent with his love, but the effects of it are influential upon their happiness. We are now tossed upon the alternate waves of time, but it is that we may arrive at the port, the blessed bosom of our Saviour, and enjoy a peaceful calm; and "so we shall be ever with the Lord." Words of infinite sweetness! This is the song of our prosperity, and the charm of our adversity: well might the apostle add immediately after, "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

4. The sincere choice of heaven as our final happiness, will make us aspire to the greatest height of holiness we are capable of in the present state. For the end has always a powerful virtue to transform a man into its likeness: and heaven is a state of perfect conformity to the holy God. This difference is observable between the understanding and the will in their operations:

the understanding in forming conceptions of things, draws the object to itself. The will is drawn by the object it chooses, and is always fashioning and framing the soul into an entire conformity to it. Thus carnal objects, when propounded as the end of a man, secretly imprint on him their likeness; his thoughts, affections, and whole conversation is carnal. As the psalmist speaks of the worshippers of idols, "they that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them:" whatever we adore and esteem, we are changed into its image. Idolaters are as stupid and senseless, as the idols to which they pay homage. Thus when God is chosen as our supreme good and last end, by conversing with him, the image of his glorious holiness is derived on the soul, and it becomes godly: the heart is drawn by his attractive excellencies, and the life directed to him. This being a point of great importance, I shall further prove and illustrate it. There is no deliberating about the degrees of that which is loved for itself as our end. More or less may respect the means that are valued and used to obtain it, but the love of the end is vast and unlimited. A physician endeavours to recover his patient to sound and perfect health, that being the end of his art. He that seeks for honour or riches, is not content with a mediocrity of success; but drives on his affairs to the full period of his desires. An ardent lover of learning with a noble jealousy strives to excel others in knowledge. In short, no man designs and longs for a thing as his happiness, but will use all diligence to gain the present and full possession of it. Therefore it cannot be imagined that any person sincerely propounds the enjoyment of heaven as his end, but love will make him fervent and industrious to be as heavenly as is possible here. He will strive by blessed and glorious gradations, to ascend to the perfection of his aims and desires, "to be holy as God is holy in all manner of conversation, to be pure as Christ is pure." We have an admirable instance of this in St. Paul, who declares, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3. 13, 14. His progress was great, yet that did not make him slack in the prosecution of his end. He laboured to attain the precedent of our Saviour, to feel the power of "his

death and life, to apprehend Christ" entirely and perfectly as "Christ had apprehended him. He was very diligent" to improve the divine image in his heart and life.

From hence we may discover the vanity of their hopes, that are of lukewarm affections in religion, (the abhorred character of Laodicea) who esteem it a prudent principle, as convenient for their carnal ease and interest, not to be "earnest in following holiness." Vices in mediocrity are tolerable with them, only the excess is condemned. They content themselves with a mediocrity in religion, and are presumptuous and secure, as the church that said, "I am rich, and have need of nothing." They boast as if they had found out the temperate region between the burning line and the frozen pole. They account all that is above their degrees in religion, to be furious or indiscreet zeal, and all below to be dead, cold profaneness. They censure those for hypocrisy or unnecessary strictness, who are visibly better, and stand upon proud comparisons with those who are visibly worse: and thus set off themselves by taxing others. But how easily do men deceive and damn themselves? Can we have too much of heaven upon the earth? Can we become too like God, when a perfect conformity to him is our duty and felicity? Indeed moral virtue consists in a mediocrity, not of the habitual quality, but of the affections and actions between the vicious extremities. Fortitude consists in the mean between cowardice, and rash boldness; but how much the more confirmed the courageous habit is, so much the more a man excels in that virtue. Liberality consists between an indiscreet profuseness, and sordid avarice; patience between a soft delicacy, and stupid insensibility. Thus philosophic virtue glories in its beauty as pure and entire, between two vicious deformities. And the religion of many is paganism dressed up in a christian fashion. But this mediocrity only belongs to inferior virtues, that respect things of created limited goodness, and is determined according to the worth of their nature. But divine graces respect an object supremely good, and their perfection consists in their most excellent degrees, and the most intense affections and operations that are leading to it. Faith in its obedience, hope in its assurance, love in its ardour can never exceed. When the object is infinite, a mediocrity is vicious. Humility can never descend too low, nor love ascend too high: for reflecting upon our natural and moral imperfec-

tions, that we are raised from nothing, that we are defiled and debased with sin, we cannot have too low thoughts of ourselves. And since God the sovereign being, infinite in perfections, and infinitely amiable, is the object, no bounds or measure must be set to our affections, but with all our united powers, "all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength," we must love him, and please him, and endeavour to be beloved of him.

There are others will acknowledge their defects, and tell you they do not pretend to eminent sanctity, to the graces of the apostles and martyrs, nor aspire to their degrees in glory; they are content with a lower place in heaven, and less strict religion is sufficient for their purpose. This deceit is strengthened by popery, that enervates and dissolves many of our Saviour's precepts, by teaching they are not laws obliging all christians to obedience, that will attain to eternal life, but counsels of perfection: if they are not done, it is no sin; and the performance of them meritoriously entitles to a richer crown. And though men by impure indulgencies please their sensual affections, yet by tasting purgatory in the way, they may come to heaven on easier terms, than a universal respect to God's commands, and an equal care to observe them. But death will confute all these feeble wretched pretences: for though the saints above shine with an unequal brightness, as the stars differ in glory; yet none are there but saints. And those who do not mourn under their imperfections, and unfeignedly desire and endeavour to be better, were never really good. The slothful servant that did not waste but neglect to improve his talent, was cast into "outer darkness." There are different degrees of punishments in hell, but the least miserable there are miserable for ever. In short, it is a perfect contradiction, a prodigy, for any man to think he is sincere in his choice, and prepared in his affections for the pure glorious felicity in heaven, that does not labour to "cleanse himself from all pollutions of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

CHAP. X.

The choice of heaven must be early, in the prime of our days. The choice must be constant. Saving perseverance includes the permanent residence of grace in the soul, and the exercise of it, and progress towards perfection. Perseverance is required, notwithstanding all temptations that may allure or terrify us from our duty. Saving perseverance excludes not all sins, but total apostacy and final impenitency. The sincerity of obedience is discovered by its constancy. A corrupt confidence, or a vicious dejection of spirit, the trusting in ourselves, and distrusting God, are equally pernicious to the stability of a christian.

2dly. THE choice of eternal felicity must be early, in the prime of our days. The rule of our duty, and reason binds us "to remember our Creator in our youth," to pay to him the first fruits of our time and strength. When we are surrounded with enticing objects, and the senses are entire and most capable to enjoy them, when the electing powers are in their vigour, then it is just we should live to God, obey him as our Lawgiver, and prefer the fruition of him in heaven, the reward of obedience, before all the pleasures of vanity. It is very honourable and pleasing to God to give the heart to him, when the flesh and the world strongly solicit to withdraw it. It is a high endearment of the soul to him, when his excellencies are prevalent in the esteem and affections above all the charms of the creatures. And it is an unspeakable satisfaction to the spirit of a man, to declare the truth and strength of his love to God, by despising temptations when they are most inviting, and the appetite is eager for the enjoyment of them. But alas! how many neglect their duty, and defer their happiness? They think it too soon to live for heaven "before the evil days come, wherein they shall have no pleasure;" when they cannot sin, and vainly presume they can repent. The danger of this I have considered in the Discourse on Death, and shall therefore proceed to the next head.

3dly. Our choice of heaven must be constant and lasting.

The two principal rules of the spiritual life are to begin and end well: to fix and establish the main design for everlasting happiness, and from a determinate resolution and ratified purpose of heart, to pursue it with firmness and constancy: to live for heaven, and with readiness and courage to die for it, if the glory of God so require. Perseverance is indispensably necessary in all that will obtain the eternal reward. For the clearing this most important point, I will, First, Represent from scripture the idea of perseverance, that is attended with salvation. Secondly, Consider why it is so strictly required.

I. Saving perseverance includes the permanent residence of grace in the soul: it is composed of the whole chain of graces, the union of holy habits that are at first infused into a christian by the sanctifying Spirit. When eternal life is promised to faith, or love, or hope, it is upon supposal that those graces being planted in the heart, shall finally prosper. "He that is faithful to the death, shall inherit the crown of life." Rev. 2. "It is love that never fails," 1 Cor. 13. that shall enter into heaven. "It is hope firm unto the end," that shall be accomplished in a glorious fruition. If grace be diseased by a usurping lust, apostacy will follow, and the forfeiture of our right in the kingdom of heaven.

2. Grace must be continually drawn forth into exercise according to our several states and duties, and the various occasions that happen in our course through the world. Those "who are light in the Lord, are commanded to walk as children of the light;" to signify the excellency and purity of the christian life. "Those who live in the Spirit, must walk in the Spirit;" that is, by a conspicuous course of holiness declare the vigour and efficacy of the divine principle that is communicated to them. *Paulum sepultæ distat inertiæ celata virtus:* virtue that breaks not forth into visible actions, is not worthy of the name. The mere abstaining from evil is not sufficient, but all the positive acts of the holy life are to be constantly done. In discharging both these parts of our duty, complete religion is expressed, and the power of grace consists.

3. Perseverance includes not only continuance in well-doing, but fervour and progress towards perfection. There are two fixed states, the one in heaven, the other in hell. The blessed spirits above are arrived to the height of holiness. The devil and

damned spirits are sunk to the lowest extremity of sin. But in the middle state here, grace in the saints is a rising growing light; and sin in the wicked improves every day, like poison in a serpent, that becomes more deadly by his age. We are enjoined not to remain in our first imperfections, but to "follow holiness" to the utmost issue of our lives, to its entire consummation. For this end all the dispensations of providence must be improved, whether prosperous or afflicting. And the ordinances of the gospel were appointed, that in the use of them we may be "changed into the divine image from glory to glory."

4. Perseverance is required notwithstanding all temptations that may allure or terrify us from our duties; whatever affects us one way or other, while we are clothed with frail flesh. It is the fundamental principle of christianity declared by our Saviour, "If any man will come after me," that is, be my disciple and servant, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;" even to be crucified with him, rather than wilfully forfeit his integrity and loyalty to Christ. He must by a * sacred fixed resolution divest himself of all things, even the most valued and desirable in the present world, and actually forsake them, nay entertain what is most distasteful, "and resist unto blood," rather than desert his duty.

(1.) He must with unfainting patience continue in doing his duty, notwithstanding all miseries and calamities, losses, disgraces, torments, or death itself, which wicked men, and greater enemies, the powers of darkness, can inflict upon him. "To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality, eternal life is promised." Rom. 2. "He that endures to the end" (notwithstanding the most terrible sufferings to which he is exposed for Christ's) sake "shall be saved." Matt. 10. 22. In this a christian must be the express image of his Saviour; "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God." Disgrace and pain are evils that human nature has a most tender sense of; yet the Son of God, with a divine generosity and constancy, endured them in the highest

* Natator amnem interpositum superaturus, exultur, nec tamen hoc tanto apparatu, quod se dispoliaverit, transnatabit, nisi totius corporis nisu torrentis impetum scindat, & laborem natationis exhauriat. *Paulin.*

degrees. He was scorned as a feigned king, and a false prophet. He suffered a bloody death, and by the cross ascended to glory. And we must follow him, if we desire to be where he is.

(2.) But this is not the only trial of a christian. Prosperity is a more dangerous enemy to the soul, though adversity be more rigorous.

Sævior armis
Incumbit luxuria. JUVEN.

For the spirit is excited by perils and difficulties to seek to God for strength, and with vigilant resolute thoughts unites all its powers to oppose them; but it is made weak and careless by what is grateful to the sensual inclinations. It keeps close the spiritual armour in the open encounter of dangers that threaten its ruin, but is enticed to put it off by the caresses and blandishments of the world. It does not see its enemies under the disguise of a pleasant temptation. Thus sin insinuates itself, and by stealing steps gets into the throne without observation. A man is wounded with a pleasant temptation, as with the plague that flies in the dark, and grace is insensibly weakened. From hence it is, that adversity often reforms the vicious, and prosperity corrupts the virtuous. Now perseverance must be of proof against fire and water, against whatever may terrify or allure us from our duty.

5. Saving perseverance excludes not all sins, but total apostacy, and final impenitency, which are fatal and deadly under the new covenant. "If the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, he shall die." Ezek. 18. 24. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," saith the Lord, Heb. 10. 38. These threatenings imply, there is a possibility of the saints falling away considered in themselves; but not that they are ever totally deserted by the Holy Spirit, and left under the reigning power of sin. The threatenings are intended to awaken their care, and are preservatives of them from ruin, and have a singular influence on their perseverance. A vigilant and

cautious fear establishes the certainty of their hope. Indeed from the relics of weakness and corruption in the saints, they sometimes actually fall into presumptuous sins, and by rebellious relapses wound conscience, and let out much of the vital spirits, their graces and comforts. But though the divine nature in them is miserably wasted by such sins, yet it is not abolished. As after the creation of light, there was never pure and total darkness in the world. Grace does not consist in a point, but is capable of degrees. The new creature may decline in beauty and strength, yet life remain. Between a lively and a dead faith, there may be a fainting faith; as in St. Peter, for certainly our Saviour was heard in his prayer for him, that his "faith should not fail" in his dreadful temptation. The saints do not by a particular fall extinguish the first living principles of obedience, faith and love; nor change their last end by an entire turning from God to the world. In short, a single act of wickedness does not reduce them into a state of unregeneracy: for it is not the matter of the sin singly considered, but the disposition of the sinner that denominates him. If grace in the saints should utterly perish, as some boldly assert, their recovery would be impossible: for the apostle tells us, that "if those who were enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift," that had been under some common workings and lower operations of the Spirit, if such "fall away universally," and live in a course of sin opposite to their former illuminations and resolutions, it is impossible to renew them by repentance; how much more then if those who were truly sanctified by the Holy Spirit, should entirely lose all those gracious habits planted in them in their regeneration? But David, though guilty of adultery and murder, sins of so foul a nature as would dishonour paganism itself, and "made the enemies of God to blaspheme," was restored by repentance. The gospel propounds a remedy, not only for sins committed before conversion, but after it. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." God does not revoke the adoption, nor reverse the justification of a believer, but upon scandalous disorders, the effects of justification are suspended with respect to the new contracted guilt, till there be sincere and actual repentance. He is not disinherited, but his right to the kingdom of heaven is eclipsed as to the comfortable sense of it, nay suspended, till by renovation he is

qualified and made fit for the enjoyment of that pure inheritance. For those sins which are a just cause of excommunicating an offender from the church on earth, would exclude him from the kingdom of heaven without repentance. Our Saviour tells us, "what is bound on earth, is ratified in heaven." And the apostle expressly declares of those kinds of sin for which professors must be removed from the communion of saints here, that they are an exclusive bar from the kingdom of heaven. "But I have written to you, not to keep company, if any that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat." 1 Cor. 5. 11. "And know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. If one that is truly a child of God fall into any of these sins, till by an extraordinary repentance he is prepared for pardon, he cannot obtain it, nor have a comfortable hope of entering into heaven. For only those "who are justified, are glorified." Indeed it is not imaginable where "the seed of God remains," the vital principle of grace, as it does in "all that are born of God," but that notorious sins that cannot be concealed from the view of conscience, will cause stings and sorrows proportionable to their malignity, and consequently a hatred and forsaking of them. Now perseverance principally respects the end of our course: there may be interruptions in the way for a time; but if with renewed zeal and diligence we prosecute our blessed end, we shall not fall short of it.

Secondly. I come now to consider the second thing propounded, the reason why perseverance is requisite in all that will obtain eternal life; and it is this, that their sincerity may be discovered by constancy in obedience under all trials. "Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." The law required unsinning obedience as the condition of life, the gospel accepts of sincerity; but if that be wanting, there is no promise that gives right to the reward. Now sincerity implies such an entire love of God, as makes a person submit to all duties commanded in his law, and all trials.

appointed by his providence. A high example we have of this in Abraham, when he was commanded to offer up his only son Isaac, and by his own hands, for a burnt-offering. This was to kill a double sacrifice at one blow; for the life of Ahraham was bound up in Isaac: he lived in him more dearly than in himself; all his joy, all his posterity by Sarah had died in Isaac. What resentments, what resistance of nature did he suffer? yet presently he addressed himself to perform his duty. Whoever saw a more glorious victory over all the tender and powerful passions of human nature? O unexampled obedience! being an original without any precedent to imitate, and without a copy to succeed it. After this clear infallible testimony of his sincerity, the angel declared from heaven, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." And it is said concerning the followers of the Lamb, that "they loved not their lives unto the death." The love of Christ that animated them in all their sufferings, was sweeter than life, and stronger than death.

Indeed there was a wonderful difference in the behaviour of the martyrs under sufferings, but in all the same persevering grace was evident, though working variously. Some in the most beautiful flower of their age encountered fire and sword, tormentors and torments, with that sensible joy, with those songs of praise to Christ, as if they saw the heavens open with St. Stephen, and their Saviour ready to receive and crown them. But many others, as Chrysostom testifies, * went to the tribunals, to the theatres, to death, with many appearances of fear. Upon hearing the wild beasts roar, they were struck with horror; at the sight of the executioners and the instruments of torment, they were pale and trembling. The flesh seemed to cry out, "O let this cup pass from me;" yet weak and faint, it followed the spirit, that corrected the natural desire, with "not my will, but thine be done." As the moon in eclipse, though obscure, yet goes on in a regular course, as when it is full of light by the reflection of the sun: so those desolate martyrs, though as it were forsaken, and deprived of the bright beams of comfort, yet persevered in their profession of the truth. When one word to renounce christianity would have saved them, no torments could

* Homil. 6, de laud. Paul.

force it from them, but they patiently endured all. Now in these the combat of nature was visible, and the admirable power of grace. They first overcame their own fears, the reluctancy of the carnal part, their affection to whatever is desirable in the world, which is the noblest victory, and then the cruelty of their persecutors. In them was verified the testimony of the Spirit, "here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the command of God and the faith of Jesus."

But how many appear faithful while their faith is not to be showed by difficult works, and proved by sufferings? The seed that fell on the stony ground, sprang up as hopeful as the seed in the good ground at first; but when tribulation came, it withered away, wanting the root of sincerity. And that which was sown among thorns, was choaked by the cares and pleasures of the world. Some lust in the heart interweaves with the affections, and causes apostacy. How many from glorious beginnings have made a lamentable end? not only mercenaries in religion, whose zeal is a foreign complexion, not springing from an inward principle of life and health, relinquish even the profession of godliness, when their gain ceases; but some who have thought themselves sincere, yet in times of danger their resolutions, like the morning dew, have suddenly vanished. As the foolish builder that computed not the charges of his designed work, began to raise a magnificent structure, but unable to finish it, laid the foundation in his own shame. They repented their choice of heaven when they saw what it must cost them, and would save the world with the loss of their souls.

Others that began in the spirit, and with raised affections set out in the ways of godliness, yet by the allurements of sensual lusts and temptations, (and therefore with greater * guilt) leave their first love, and end in the flesh. They fall from high professions, but, deceived by soft pleasure, feel not the fall. These were never sincere, and never had a right to heaven. They took up sudden resolutions, not grounded in serious and deep thoughts, and for a flash were hot and active, but with great levity return

* Quæ justior venia in omnibus causis, quam voluntarius, an quam invitus peccator implorat? Negationem quanta compelluat, ingenia carnificum, & genera pœnarum? Quis magis negavit, qui Christum vexatus, an qui delectatus amisit? Qui quum amitteret doluit, an qui quum amitteret lusit? *Tert. de pudicit.*

to their former lusts. The apostle tells us of such, "it had been better for them they had not known the way of righteousness, than to turn back and voluntarily to forsake it." It is observed that boiling water taken off from the fire, congeals more strongly than that which was never heated: because the subtile parts being evaporated by the fire, the more terrestrial parts remaining are more capable of cold. So those who have felt the power of the word in their affections, and afterwards lose that holy heat, become more hardened in their sins. God justly withdraws his grace, and the evil spirit that was expelled for a time, returns with seven worse, and aggravates his tyranny.

To conclude; since the certainty of salvation is conditional, if we persevere in a holy state, let us beware of a corrupt confidence, and a vicious dejection of spirit, the trusting in ourselves, or distrusting God. To prevent the trusting in ourselves, consider,

1. The most excellent creatures are by the instability of nature liable to defection, subject to a corruptive change. Of this the fallen angels are a dreadful example, who of their own motion, untempted, sinned in heaven.

2. The danger is greater of falling away, when they are urged and solicited by a violent or grateful temptation. Thus our first parents fell, and lost more grace in an hour, than can be recovered by their posterity in all ages to the end of the world.

3. When there is a supervenient corruption in the creature, that inclines them with earnest propensity to forbidden things, and takes flame from every spark, the danger is extreme. Like a besieged city that is in great hazard of taking, by assaults from without, and conspiracies from within. Let us therefore be very watchful over our hearts and senses, and keep as much as is possible at a safe distance from temptations; and be very diligent in the use of all holy means to confirm and fortify our resolutions for heaven. God promised to Hezekiah fifteen years, but not to preserve his life by miracle; he was obliged to repair the wastings of nature by daily food, and to abstain from what was noxious and destructive to his body. The apostle excites christians to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that works in them to will and to do of his good pleasure. Let him that stands take heed lest he fall." None

are a more easy conquest to the tempter than those who presume upon their own strength. We should be always jealous of ourselves, from the sad examples of apostacy in every age. * St. Ambrose testifies from his own knowledge, that many after the courageous enduring of cruel torments for religion, the tearing open their sides that their bowels appeared, and the burning of some parts of their bodies; yet when led forth to finish the "victory of faith," to be a triumphant "spectacle to angels and men," when the blessed Rewarder was ready to put the martyrs' crown on their heads, at the sight of their mourning wives and children in the way, were overcome by pity, the weakest affection, and failed in the last act of christian fortitude. "We must pray to be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." For some may vigorously resist one sort of temptation, and render themselves to others. And if finally vanquished by one of those enemies, we lose our victory and crown.

And as presumption betrays the soul into the devil's snares, so a vicious dejection of spirit from a distrust of relief from God in our difficulties, and his assistance with our unfeigned endeavours for salvation is very pernicious. For this damps industry, and causes either a total neglect, or uncomfortable use of means for that end. Many christians considering their graces are weak, their nature fickle and apt to revolt, are ready (as David said, "one day I shall perish by the hand of Saul) to conclude sadly of the issue of their condition. To encourage such, let them consider, that perseverance is not only a condition, but a privilege of the covenant of grace; for that assures us of supply of spiritual strength to the sincere believer for performing the condition it requires. Indeed if grace were the mere product of free-will, the most fervent resolutions would vanish into a lie, upon the assault of an overpowering temptation. As Hezekiah acknowledged, that the Assyrian kings had "destroyed the gods of the nations that were no gods, but idols, the work of mens'

* Denique sæpe cognovimus, quoniam quem formidolosa carnificum pompa non terruit, nec divisi lateris sulcus infregit, nec ardentes laminæ a triumphalis fortitudinis vigore abducere potuerunt, eum inter sacra præmia constitutum, uxor teneræ prolis oblatione, miserabilis unius lacrymæ miseratione decepit.

hands." But sanctifying grace is the effect of the Holy Spirit; and he that "begins that good work in the saints, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He that inclined them joyfully to choose the spiritual eternal good, will bind their inconstant hearts, that by a faithful adherence they shall cleave to their duty and felicity. God hath most graciously declared, "I will put my spirit into their hearts, that they shall never depart from me." The promise is founded in the unchangeable love of God to his people. Were God, as man, subject to variation, there might be jealousies in believers, lest they should lose his good will: as those who depend on princes, are suspicious lest from the natural inconstancy of the human will, a new favorite should supplant them. "But whom God loves, he loves to the end." The apostle prays for the Thessalonians, "that God would preserve them blameless until the coming of Christ; by this consideration, "faithful is he that calleth you, he will do it." He speaks of the internal call, that opens the heart, and overpowers all resistance. As when the angel came with a light shining in the prison to St. Peter, and struck him on the side, bid him arise quickly, loosed his chains, and led him through the guards, opened the doors, and restored him to liberty. The effectual calling of a sinner is the visible and infallible effect of electing mercy; and God is unchangeable in his own purpose, and faithful to his promises of bringing all such by sanctification to glory. The same apostle tells the saints at Corinth, that the Redeemer would confirm them to the end: "God is faithful, by whom ye are called." Grace that was at first inspired, is continually actuated by the spirit, who is "styled the earnest of the saints' inheritance." So that whereas the angels that excelled in strength, kept not their first state of purity and glory, but are sunk into corruption and misery; yet true humble believers, though weak, and encompassed with many difficulties, shall be preserved from destructive evil, and raised to an unchangeable estate of perfection. This is as truly admirable, as if the stars should fall from heaven, and clods of earth ascend and shine in the firmament. The apostle, who acknowledged "his insufficiency of himself to think a good thought;" yet triumphantly declares, "I can do all things" (within the compass of his duty) "through Christ that strengthens me." The love, fidelity, and power of God, are a sure fountain of assistance to every christian,

that sincerely resolves and endeavours to prosecute his last and blessed end.

CHAP. XI.

Directions to fix the choice aright. The danger from the senses and the fancy, of perverting our choice. The power of fancy considered. The carnal affections are the worst counsellors. The senses and carnal affections are incapable of apprehending spiritual things; they are deceitful and very numerous and clamorous. The general example of men is corruptive of our judgments about worldly things. It is foolish to be directed by the multitude in an affair of eternal moment. The universal judgment of worldly men in their last serious hours, is considerate, and to be believed.

ii. I SHALL now come to the directions how to fix our choice aright.

This is a matter of everlasting consequence; it therefore becomes us with the most intense application of mind to consider it, and according to the advice of wisdom, "to keep the heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Indeed the choice were not difficult between lying vanities and substantial blessedness, if uncorrupted reason had the superior sway: but in this lapsed state of nature, the understanding and will are so depraved, that present things pleasing to sense, ravish the heart into a compliance. Men are deceived, not compelled into ruin: the subtile seducer prevails by fair temptations. This will be evident by reflecting upon the frame and composition of man, as he consists of spirit, soul and body, and the manner of his acting. The spirit is the intellective discerning faculty, the seat of reason, capable to compare and judge of the qualities of things, and foresee their issues. The body includes the lower

faculties, the senses, fancy and passions, that are conversant about present things. The soul is the will, the principle of election, in the midst of the other, as the centre to which all their addresses flow. Now upon the proposal of the spiritual and carnal good in order to choice, the will is to be directed by the mind, and by its own authority to rule the lower passions. But alas! the mind has lost its primitive light and purity, vigilance and integrity, neglects its duty, and from ignorance, error and carnal prejudices often pleads for the flesh: and the will, the rational appetite, is voluntarily subordinate, and enslaved by the sensitive. From hence it is, that in the competition, heaven with all its glory is despised, and the present world embraced. To open this more particularly, consider:

1. The senses can only taste and enjoy grosser dreggy pleasures.

2. The fancy that depends upon them in its operations, and is guided by their report, conceives of felicity only under the notion of sensitive pleasure. We may illustrate this by the practice of * Aretius a painter, recorded with infamy, who being often employed to paint the goddesses to be set in the pagan temples, always drew their pictures by the faces and complexions of his harlots, that the objects of his impure love might have veneration, and a divinity attributed to them, under the titles, and pretence of Minerva, Juno, Diana, and the other goddesses adored by the heathens. This impiety in an idolater, is resembled by men who fancy happiness (that is a spiritual divine perfection enjoyed in the glorious vision of God) to be a carnal fruition, and having with sensible colours and lineaments represented it agreeable to their brutish faculties, place it in their hearts, and sacrifice all their thoughts, affections, and service to it.

The fancy is very powerful in men upon a double account.

(1.) The understanding naturally receives the notions of things by phantasms that are still mixing in its contemplations. While the soul is confined to a tabernacle of flesh, it apprehends no object without the precedent excitation of the senses. From whence it is impossible, that a person absolutely deprived of sight from his birth, should have an idea of light, or colours; or that is

* Flagitio insigni, semper alicujus fœminæ amore flagrans, & ob id Deas plagens sub dilectarum imagine. Itaq; Scorta ejus venerabantur. *Plin.*

born deaf, should conceive what sound is; the sense never having imparted an account of it to them. And the image of the object is not immediately transmitted from the sense to the mind, but first to the imagination, that prepares it for its view. And from hence the sensual fancy is so predominant in swaying the judgment, and inclining the will. As those counsellors of state that have the ear of the prince, and are continually with him, by specious informations, and disguising truth, influence him to approve or reject persons and things according to the various aspects given by them. The same object propounded in a dark confused manner, weakly moves us; but varnished and beautified with lively and pleasant colours by the imagination, is armed with such power that ravishes the esteem of the mind, and consent of the will. Now celestial happiness being purely spiritual, "such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man to conceive," though some discoveries be made of it by revelation, yet the imagination makes such an obscure detracting idea of it, that it affects no more, than a dead shadow drawn in some imperfect lines of an exquisite beauty. But when the fancy is warmed and enlivened by the presence of sensible objects, it makes a vigorous impression of them upon the mind, and that represents the pictures of pleasure as very lovely and delightful to the will, which presently embraces them.

(2.) The fancy has a marvellous force upon the sensitive appetite, that eagerly desires what is represented as pleasant, though the enlightened mind sees through the temptation, and knows it is a mere dream, that brings neither solid nor durable joy. One in a fever is pleased by imagining fountains and streams, though he knows that imaginary waters cannot quench his thirst, nor afford the least real refreshment. Now the sensitive appetite being inflamed by the fancy, imparts a contagious fire to the will, and that induces the mind, either to concur with it, and palliate the deceit, and to judge favourably according to its inclinations, or makes it slack or remiss in its office, diverting the thoughts from what might control the appetite; or if the understanding still contradicts, yet it is in so cold and speculative a manner, "that the law of the members" rebels against the superior light, and is too strong "for the law of the mind," and that saying is verified,

Video meliora proboq ;
Deteriora sequor.

I see what is worthy to be chosen, but pursue what is to be abhorred. Thus miserably weak are the rational guiding powers in man since his fall, thus imperious and violent the brutish faculties. In short, illusion and concupiscence are the principal causes why the most noble and divine good is undervalued and rejected in comparison of inferior transitory vanities. O the cheap damnation of beguiled souls! A mess of pottage was more valuable to Esau, than the birthright that had annexed to it the regal and priestly dignity. Unwise and unhappy wretches! "that follow lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies."

Thus I have briefly set down the process of men's foolish choice in this degenerate state. Now that we may with a free uncorrupted judgment compare things in order to a wise choice of true felicity, it follows from what has been said, that as the apostle in obeying his heavenly commission, "conferred not with flesh and blood; we must not in this matter of infinite importance, attend,

1st. To the suggestions and desires of the senses and carnal appetites, which are the worst counsellors, as being incapable of judging what is our proper happiness, deceitful and importunate.

(1.) They are incapable of apprehending spiritual eternal things, which alone bring true and complete satisfaction to the soul, and cannot look forward to the end of sinful pleasures, and balance the terrible evils they leave at parting, with the slight vanishing content that springs from their presence. Therefore as blind persons lay hold on things they feel, so the sensitive faculties, that are blind and brutish, adhere to gross present enjoyments, not understanding the pure spotless felicity that is to come, and despising what they do not understand. Now who would in an affair upon which his all depends, advise with children and fools, whose judgment of things is without counsel, their counsel without discourse, their discourse without reason? There is nothing more contrary to the order of nature, than for men that should affect with judgment, to judge by their affections.

(2.) The carnal appetite with its lusts are very deceitful, a

party within holding correspondence with our spiritual enemies, the armies of evil angels, so active and assiduous in conspiring and accomplishing the damnation of men. The devil in scripture is called the tempter by way of eminence, who manages and improves all temptations; and his pernicious design is by the objects of sense, ordered and made more alluring and killing by his various arts, to engage the affections into a compliance, and so to gain the will. Now our great danger is not so much from satan the enemy without, as from the carnal appetite, the traitor within, that gives him the first and easy entrance into the soul. He can only entice by representing what is amiable to sense, but the corrupt appetite inclines to the closing with it. He tempted Jesus Christ, but was repelled with shame, "having found nothing within him to work upon." The perfect regularity of faculties in our blessed Saviour was not in the least disordered, neither by his fairest insinuations, or most furious assaults. And we might preserve our innocence inviolable, notwithstanding all his attempts, did not some corrupt affection, cherished in our bosoms, lay us naked and open to his poisoned darts. The apostle Peter, who had a spiritual eye, and discerned wherein the strength of our great enemy lies, admonishes christians, "dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, that war against the soul." And we are told by him, that "the corruption that is in the world, is through lust." The outward objects are useful and beneficial in their kind, the abuse of them is from lust. The poison is not in the flower, but in the spider. It is therefore infinitely dangerous to consult, or trust our carnal faculties in this matter, for they are bribed and corrupted, and will commend temporal things to our choice.

(3.) The sensual affections are so numerous and clamorous, so vehement and hasty, that if they are admitted to counsel, and give the decisive vote, the voice of conscience will not be heard or regarded. In concernments of a lower nature, it is constantly seen, that nothing more disturbs reason, and makes men improvident and precipitant in their determinations, than a disordered passion. From hence, it is a prudent rule, that as it is not fit to eat in the height of a fever, because the meat feeds the disease, by increasing the feverish, not the vital heat: so it is not good to deliberate in the heat of any affection. For then the thoughts strongly blow up the passion, and smother reason, and

the mind is rather a party than a judge: but after the declination of that fever in the soul, in a quiet interval, it is seasonable to consider. Now if any simple passion when moved, transports and confounds the mind, and makes it incapable of judging aright, much more the love of the world, a universal passion that reigns in men, and has so many swarming desires answerable to the variety of sensible things, and therefore is more unruly, lasting and dangerous than any particular passion. In short, sensual affections captivate the mind, and hinder its due considering the folly and obliquity of the carnal choice, and when incensed (as distracted persons whose strength grows with their fury) violently break all the restraints the understanding can apply from reason and revelation.

2dly. In order to make a right choice, we must be very watchful lest the general example of men taint our reason, and cause an immoderate esteem of temporal things. "The whole world lies in wickedness," in a sensual sty, without conscience of its misery, or care of regaining its happiness, deceived and pleased with shows of felicity. The way to hell is broad, as the inclinations of the licentious appetite; pleasant, as the delights of sense; so plain and easy, that men go to it * blindfold; and so frequented, that it would force tears from any considering person, to see men so hasty to meet with damnation. When Calisto the harlot reproached Socrates that there were more followers of her beauty than his wisdom; the † philosopher replied, that was not strange, because it was much easier to draw them in the way of pleasure, that is steep and slippery, than to constrain them to ascend to virtue, seated on a hill, where the ascent is slow, and with toil and difficulty. Now there is nothing more contagious than example. We blindly consent with the multitude, and are possessed with foolish wonder, and carnal admiring of worldly greatness, treasures and delights, neglecting to make a due estimation of things. It is the ordinary artifice of the devil to render temporal things more valuable and attractive to particular persons, from the common practice of men who greedily pursue

* Biog.

† Σὺ μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ τὴν κατάντη αὐτὸς πάντας ἄγεις, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἕκειν βιάζομαι, ὀρθία δὲ ἄνοδός ἐστι, καὶ ἀηδὲς τοῖς πολλοῖς. *Ælian. l.* 13. 32. *c.*

them as their happiness. As some crafty merchants, by false reports raise the exchange, to advance the price of their own wares. The men of the world are under the direction of sense, and think them only to be wise and happy that shine in pomp, abound in riches, and overflow in pleasures. The psalmist tells us of the prosperous worldling, "that while he lives, he blesses his soul; and men will praise thee when thou dost well to thyself." By vicious imitation our judgments are more corrupted, and our passions raised to higher degrees for painted vanities. The affections in the pursuit of earthly things are inflamed by the contention of others. And when holy desires and resolutions spring up in men, yet so powerful is the custom of the world, that they often become ineffectual. As a ship whose sails are filled with a fair wind, but makes no way, stopped by the force of the current. Now to fortify us against the pernicious influence of example, consider,

(1.) It is most unreasonable in this affair of so vast moment to be under the direction of the multitude. For the most are sottish and sensual, governed by the uncertain motions of a giddy voluble fancy, and roving impetuous passion; so that to be led by their example, and disregard the solid immortal rules of heavenly wisdom, is as perfect madness, as for one to follow a herd of swine through the mire, and leave a clean path that lies before him. If there were but few in an age or country that were deluded with false appearances, it would be a disgrace to imitate the practice of the foolish: and shall the great numbers of the earthly-minded give reputation and credit to their error? He were a strange fool indeed, that should refuse a single piece of counterfeit money, and receive a great heap in payment: as if the number added a real value to them. It is therefore a necessary point of wisdom to divest all * vulgar prejudices, to separate ourselves from the multitude, that we may see the vanity of things, that dazzle inferior minds.

(2.) Consider the universal judgment even of worldly men in their last and serious hours, when the prospect of eternal things is open before them. How vastly different are their apprehensions of temporal things in the review, from what they were in

* Nunquam de vitâ judicatur, semper creditur, sanabimur, si modo separemur a cœtu. *Sen. de. vit. Beat.*

their vicious desires? How often do they break forth in the sorrowful words of the apostle, "We have been toiling all night, and caught nothing?" When there are but a few remaining sands in the glass of time, and death shakes the glass before them, how powerfully do they preach of the emptiness and uncertainty of things below, and sigh out in Solomon's phrase, "All is vanity?" And this is more singularly observable in those who have had the fullest enjoyment of earthly things. How do they complain of the vain world, and their vainer hearts, when experience has convinced them of their woful folly? Solomon who was among other princes, as the sun in the midst of the planets, that obscures them by his illustrious brightness; he that had surveyed this continent of vanity, to make an experiment whether any satisfaction could be found in it, at last sadly declares, that all things here below are but several kinds and ranks of vanities, as ineffectual to make men happy, as counterfeit jewels of several colours are to enrich the possessor. Nay they are not only vanity, but vexation, an empty show that has nothing real but the vexation of disappointment. And shall we not value the judgment of men when they are best instructed, and give credit to their testimony when they are sincere? Certainly in their approaches to the divine judgment they are most considerate and serious, they have the truest and justest thoughts of things, and most freely declare them. O the astonishing folly of men! they will not be convinced of the error of their ways, till they come to the end of them, and the sun is set, and no time remains for their returning into the way of life.

CHAP. XII.

A steadfast belief of unseen eternal things is necessary to direct our choice. Faith realizes things future, and controls the efficacy of present temptations. The neglect of the great salvation proceeds from infidelity. The most that are believers in title, are infidels in their hearts. Consideration is necessary in order to a wise choice. It must be serious and deliberate; frequent, and with application to the soul. Motives to consideration. It is the noblest exercise of the mind, and most profitable.

iii. I Shall proceed to show further what is necessary to direct us in our choice, that we may not fall into the double misery, of being deceived with a false happiness for a little time, and deprived of true happiness for ever.

First, A sound and steadfast belief of unseen eternal things.

Secondly, Serious consideration of the vast difference between things that are the objects of sight, and that are the objects of faith.

First. The sound and steadfast belief of eternal things is requisite to direct our choice aright. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11. 1. It assures us of their reality and worth, as if they were before our eyes, and in our actual possession. This divine light governs and conducts the will to choose wisely, and excites all the practic powers for the preventing the greatest evils, and the obtaining perfect felicity. When the devil, the deadly flatterer, by inviting representations of the world, entices the heart, the serious belief of the future reward so glorious and eternal, disgraces the most splendid temptations, and makes them ineffectual. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." If tempted to lasciviousness by the allurements of an earthly beauty, faith represents the angelical lustre of the saints, when they shall come with the unspotted Lamb in his glorious appearance; and this unbinds the charm, and makes the tempting person an object not of desire, but aversation. If tempted with honour to a sinful compliance, faith represents so convincingly the glory which all those who preserve their conscience and integrity

inviolable, shall receive at the universal judgment, in the presence of God, and the holy angels, (as our Saviour hath promised, "He that serves me, him will my Father honour") and the confusion wherein the most honourable sinners shall then be covered, that with a generous disdain all secular honours will be despised. And it is as powerful to enervate the temptation of temporal profit. We read of Moses, "that by faith, when he was come to years," (and therefore more capable to understand and enjoy what felicity the brightest honours and greatest riches could afford) "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompence of reward." And all the evils which a wicked world, inspired with rage from satan, can threaten to fright us from our duty, poverty, disgrace, banishment, nay torments and death, those terribles *visu formæ*, so heightened by the carnal fancy, are easily overcome by a sincere and strong believer. Thus some who were urged by such motives to renounce their religion, * told the persecutors, that life was not sweet to them if they might not live christians, nor death bitter, if they must die for Christ. A lively firm persuasion of the excellence and eternity of the reward, what miraculous effects would it produce? Nothing would be impossible within the compass of our duty, either to do or suffer in order to a glorious immortality. Faith has a celestial power, a magnetic virtue to draw up the heart from the earth, and fastens it to things above. It is not imaginable that a clear-sighted soul, that sees a good infinitely great, should reject it for mean things to please the lower desires. We may as probably imagine, that a skilful jeweller would part with the richest oriental pearls, for cherry stones to play with children.

From hence we may discover the true cause of the neglect of the great salvation offered in the gospel; "the word preached does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it." It is astonishing to consider that earth should contend with heaven for our affections, and prevail against it; that vanity should turn the scale against the "exceeding and eternal weight

* Nec verebamur occidi, quos constat; quando occidimur, coronari. *Cyp.*

of glory;". that men should pursue fleeting shadows, and neglect the most excellent realities, as if they could be happy here, and continue here for ever, and hereafter there were neither happiness nor eternity. But this releases the wonder, that "all men have not faith." Eternal things are not of conspicuous moment in the carnal balance. Some are infidels in profession, openly declaring themselves to be without religion, without God, and have the same credit of the heaven and hell discovered in the gospel, as of the Elisian fields, and Stygian lake, the fables of the poets. These live as if they should never die, and die as if they should never live in the other world; as if death caused so deep a sleep, that the voice of the Son of God could not awaken them at the last day. Their unbelief is not from reason, but vicious opposite affections; for the truth of the eternal state is so clearly revealed, and strongly established in the gospel, that the sincere mind must readily assent to it. But the wicked cannot delight in the discovery of that for which they are unprepared, and therefore try all ways to elude the force of the most satisfying arguments. Their infidelity is obstinate and incurable. An instance whereof we have in the pharisees, who rejected our Saviour. Though all the characters of the Messiah were conspicuous in his person, though his doctrines were confirmed by miracles, yet they would not yield up themselves to that omnipotent conviction; so strong were their carnal prejudices against his humble state, and holy doctrines. That reproach is more justly due to infidels under the gospel, than to Israel in the prophet: "Who is blind as my servant?" The heathens who are blind from their birth, and have only some glimmering apprehension that eternity succeeds time, are less culpable than those who have infinitely more reason to believe it, and yet believe it less. The plea for them will be a terrible accusation against such unbelievers. If a blind person falls, it moves compassion; but if one voluntarily shuts his eyes against the sun, and refuses the direction of the light, and falls from a precipice, his ruin is the just consequence of his folly. Simple ignorance excuses as to the degrees of the fault, but affected wilful ignorance, now reason and revelation with united beams give so clear a prospect into the eternal world, aggravates the guilt and sentence of such unbelievers.

Besides, the most who are believers in title, are infidels in heart. Our Saviour tells the Jews, who pretended the highest

veneration of the writings of Moses, "That if they had believed Moses, they would have believed him, for Moses wrote of him." If men did seriously believe such an excellent reward as the gospel propounds, would it be a cold unpersuasive motive to them? The depravation of the will argues a correspondent defect in the mind; though not absolute total infidelity, yet such a weakness and wavering in the assent, that when temptations are present and urgent, and it comes to actual choice, sense prevails over faith. This will be clear by universal experience in temporal things. The probable hope of gain will make those who are greedy of gold, prodigal of their lives, and venture through tempestuous seas to accomplish their desires. And if the belief were equal, would not men do or suffer as much for obtaining what is infinitely more valuable? A firm assent would produce adherence, and faith in the promises, fidelity in obeying the commands of Christ. Tertullian propounds it as a powerful incentive to the martyrs, *Quis ergo non libentissime tantum pro vero habeat erogare, quantum alii pro falso?* Who would not joyfully sacrifice life and all its endearments, to obtain true blessedness, which others do for the vain appearance of it? Men may be as truly subjects without subjection, as believers without a heavenly conversation, which is inseparable from the reality of faith. Many in the bosom of the church are as truly, though not so notoriously, infidels, as Turks and heathens. Indeed even in true believers, the apprehension of eternal things has such great allays, that temporal things are overvalued and over-feared. A strong faith in the truth and power of God, would make the glorious world so sure and near in our thoughts, that with indifferent affections we should receive good or evil things here; "Rejoice as if we rejoiced not, and mourn as if we mourned not." Our lives would be so regular and pure, as if the Judge were to come the next hour, as if the sun did now begin to be darkened, and the trumpet of the archangel were sounding, and the noise of the dissolving world were universally heard. Infidelity deads the impression, and suppresses the reigning power of eternal things in our hearts. In short men are heavenly or earthly in their choice and conversation, as they are directed by the sincere light of faith, or misled by the false beams of sense.

Secondly. The second thing requisite in order to a wise choice, is consideration. For as by faith the virtue of the reward is dif-

fused through all the faculties, and the powers of the world to come are felt in the soul; so by consideration faith is exercised, and becomes effectual. This unites and reinforces the beams of eternal truth, and inflames the affections. As the psalmist expresses himself, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned." Heaven is a felicity so glorious and attractive, that if duly considered, no man can possibly refuse it: and hell is a misery so extreme and fearful, that if seriously laid to heart, none can possibly choose it. The last end is to be conceived under the notion of an infinite good, without the least mixture of evil, to which the human will swayed by the invincible impression of nature has a tendency. The liberty of indifference is with respect to some particular good things, which may be variously represented, so as to cause inclination or aversion. That men who believe eternal life is the reward of holiness, yet with a careless inadvertency neglect their duty; and that eternal death is the wages of sin, yet securely continue in it, is more wonderful than to see martyrs sing in the flames; and the great cause of it is the neglect of consideration. This is assigned to be the cause of that unnatural and astonishing rebellion of Israel against God their Father and sovereign: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Isa. 1. 2, 3.

This duty, as it is of admirable advantage, so it is universally necessary; for all are equally concerned, and it is within the power of all to perform. Though men cannot convert themselves, yet they may consider what is preparatory to conversion. For the will may turn the thoughts of the mind to any sort of objects.

I will briefly show the nature of this duty, and how to manage it for spiritual profit, and those objects from whence our thoughts derive vigour for the swaying of the will, and the conduct of the life.

1. The nature of consideration is discovered by its end, which is this; that the mind being satisfied in the just reasons upon which the choice of heaven is to be made, the will and affections may be engaged in an earnest, joyful and constant pursuit of it. And in this respect it differs from simple knowledge, and naked

speculation, that informs the mind, without influence and efficacy upon the heart: like a garland of flowers that adorns the head, without any benefit and refreshing to him that wears it. And practical meditation differs from the study of divine things in order to the instructing of others. That is like a merchant's buying of wine for sale, this like providing it for our own use.

2. That the consideration of eternal things may be effectual, it must be,

(1.) Serious and deliberate. For the affair is great in reality above all possible conception or comparison. All other things, how considerable soever in themselves, yet respectively and in parallel with this, are of no account. Our Saviour told Martha, "One thing is necessary: Mary hath chosen the better part, that shall not be taken from her." What instance can be of equal moment with that of entertaining the Son of God? Yet a serious attention to the words of eternal life dropping from his lips, was more necessary than making provision for him. The greatest and most weighty affairs in the world are but a vain employment, but irregularity and impertinence, in compare with eternal salvation. And the greatast solemnity of thoughts is requisite to undeceive the mind, and engage the will for heaven. It is very observable that errors in judgment and choice spring from the same causes, the not sincere and due weighing of things. In the decisions of questions, truth is discovered by comparing, with an equal staid attention, the reasons of the one and the other part. But when some vicious affection contradicts the truth, it fills the mind with prejudices, that it cannot impartially search into things, and is deceived with specious fallacies, with the image of truth. For according to the present application of the mind it is determined, and passion strongly applies it to consider that which is for the carnal interest, and consequently inclination, not reason, is the principle of the persuasion. And this is more evident in men's foolish choice: as the eye cannot see but what is visible, nor the understanding conceive what is not intelligible, the will cannot love and choose what is not amiable, at least in show. If the devil did appear without a disguise, he would have no power to persuade, but in all his temptations there is the mixture of a lie to make it pleasant. He presents a false perspective, to make what is but superficial, appear solid and substantial. And the carnal heart turns the

thoughts to what is grateful, without seriously considering what is infinitely better, and accordingly chooses by the eye of sense, the happiness of this world. Therefore till eternal things are opened in the view of conscience, and the mind calmly considers by the light of faith their reality and greatness, no right valuation, nor wise choice can be made.

Besides, the most clear and rational enforcements by the actings of the thoughts, are necessary to make a strong impression on the affections, and rescue them from the captivity of the flesh. In other things as soon as the mind is enlightened, the will resolves, and the inferior faculties obey; but such is the resistance of the carnal heart, that although it is evident from infallible principles there is an everlasting glory, infinitely to be preferred above the little appearances of beauty and pleasure here, yet the most piercing reasons enter heavily without earnest inculcation. Slight or sudden thoughts may produce vanishing affections of complacence, or distaste, and fickle resolutions, that like sick feathers drop away, and leave the soul naked to the next temptation; but solemn and fixed thoughts are powerful on the heart, in making a thorough and lasting change. When the clouds dissolve in a gentle shower, the earth drinks in all, and is made fruitful; but a few sprinkling drops, or a short storm of rain, that wets only the surface, without sinking to the root, is little beneficial. In short, there may be some excitations to good, and retractions from evil; some imperfect faint essays toward heaven, from an impulse on the mind: but solid conversion is produced by deliberate discourse, by the due consideration and estimation of things, it is rational and perpetual.

(2.) Consideration must be frequent, to keep eternal objects present, and powerful upon us. Such are the natural levity and inconstancy, sloth and carnality of the mind, that the notions of heavenly things quickly pass through, but of earthly abide there. If a stone be thrown upwards, it remains no longer in the air, than the impression of the force by which it was thrown continues; but if it falls on the earth, it rests there by nature. When the soul is raised in contemplation to heaven, how apt is it to fall from that height, and lose the esteem, the lively remembrance and affections of eternal things? But when the thoughts are excited by the presence of what is pleasing to sense, the withdrawing the object does not deface the idea of it in the memory,

nor lessen the conceit, nor cool the desires of it, because the heart is naturally inclined to it. Therefore it is necessary every day to refresh and renew the conceptions of eternal things, that although they are not always in act, yet the efficacy may be always felt in the heart and life. The soul habituated to such thoughts will not easily yield to temptations, that surprise and overcome others that are strangers in their minds to the other world: nay the presence of temptations, as by *antiperistasis*, will reinforce the resolutions for heaven; like the pouring water upon lime, that revives a hidden fire in it, which seems a natural miracle. It is therefore of great advantage frequently to sequester ourselves from the world, to redeem time from secular affairs, for the recollecting of our thoughts, and their solemn exercise upon the eternal world. Sense, that reveals natural things, darkens spiritual. How can the thoughts be fixed on invisible things so distant from sense, if always conversant with secular objects that draw them down? In the silence of the night a small voice is more distinctly heard, and a little distant light more clearly seen: so when the soul is withdrawn from the noisy throng of the world, and outward things are darkened, the voice of conscience is better heard, and the light of heaven more perfectly received.

(3.) Consideration of eternal things must be with present application to the soul. It is not the mere conviction of the mind, but the decree of the will that turns men from sin to holiness, from the creatures to God. The heart is very deceitful, and by variety of shifts and palliations is disposed to irresolutions and delays in spiritual concernments. How often does the miserable sinner contend with himself, and while conscience urges him to seek the kingdom of heaven, and the affections draw down to the earth, the carnal part prevailing over the rational, he overcomes, and is overcome; he is convinced and condemned by his own mind. Till consideration issues in this, that with settled judgment and affections the soul determines for God and heaven, it is without profit. Therefore in the managing this duty, it is our wisdom not to be curious and inquisitive after subtile conceptions, and exalted notions of the future state, that little confer to the making the heart better; but to think seriously on what is plain and evident, and most useful to produce a present lasting change. It were egregious folly in a man, that for the use of

his garden, should with great labour fetch water from distant fountains, and neglect that which springs up in his own ground. That meditation is profitable which produces not new thoughts, but holy and firm resolutions of obeying God in order to the full enjoying of him for ever.

To persuade us to the serious practice of this duty, there are many enforcements.

Is any man so foolish, so regardless of his convenience, to purchase a house wherein he must live all his days, and will not first see whether it will be convenient, and secure for his habitation? Shall we not then consider heaven the mansion of blessedness, and hell the seat of misery and horror? for according as we choose here, we shall be in the one or other place for ever. I shall in the fourth part of this treatise, endeavour to represent something of the inexpressible misery of the wicked hereafter, and show how congruous and powerful the thoughts of it are to restrain men from sin; but at present shall briefly excite to the meditation of the heavenly glory, as the most noble, delightful and fruitful work of the soul, whilst confined to the body of flesh. It is the most exalted exercise of the mind, the purest converse with God, the flower of consecrated reason. It is most like the life of glorified spirits above, who are in continual contemplation of the divine excellencies; and it is most raised above the life of carnal men, that are sunk into sensuality and brutishness. It is the most joyful life, in that it sheds abroad in the soul delights that neither satiate, nor corrupt, nor weaken the faculties, as the delights of sense do, but afford perfection as well as pleasure. It is the most profitable life. As in those parts of the earth where the beams of the sun are strongly reflected, precious metals and jewels are produced wherein the refulgent resemblance of that bright planet appears: so the lively and vigorous exercise of the thoughts upon the heavenly glory, will produce heavenly affections, heavenly discourses, and a heavenly shining conversation. This will make us live like the blessed society above, imitating their innocence and purity, their joyful, entire and constant obedience to God. This confirms the holy soul in its choice, with an invincible efficacy against the temptations and lusts of the world. The serious considering believer is filled with ravishing wonder of the glory that shall be revealed, and looks down with contempt upon the earth, and

all that has the name of felicity here. All the invitations, nay terrors of the world, are as unable to check his pursuit of his blessed end, as the breath of an infant to stop the high flight of an eagle.

But how rare and disused a duty is this? How hardly are men induced to set about it? Business and pleasures are powerful diversions. Some pretend business as a just cause, but in vain; "for the one thing necessary" challenges our principal thoughts and care. Besides, there are intervals of leisure, and the thoughts are always streaming, and often run waste, which directed aright, would be very fruitful to the soul. The true cause of this neglect is from the inward temper of men. Carnal pleasures alienate the mind, and make it unfit for the deep serious actings of the thoughts upon eternal things. "I have said of laughter, thou art mad." It makes the mind light, and vain, and desultory. As a distracted person by every motion of fancy flies from one thing to another without coherence. The heart filled with cloudy and smoky fires, with thoughts and desires about worldly things, is unprepared for such a clear, calm, and sedate work. A carnal person can taste no sweetness, feel no relish in the meditation of heaven, nor any spiritual duty. It is as if one should take some delicious fruit into his mouth, a peach, or the like, without breaking the skin; it would be rather a trouble, than pleasant. Nay, the gospel expressly declaring, "that without holiness no man shall see God:" those who by vicious affections are engaged in any sinful way, being conscious of their guilt and unpreparedness, and that while such, they are under a peremptory exclusion from celestial glory, cannot endure the thoughts of heaven. The divine presence is their torment, and the serious consideration of it is to bring them before God's holy and just tribunal, to accuse and condemn them.

CHAP. XIII.

The objects from whence consideration derives its power to direct our choice. The end for which man was designed in his creation. We must make a judicious comparison between the objects that stand in competition for our choice, the present world, and heaven. The vast difference between them in their quality and duration.

I Shall now take a particular view of those objects, from whence consideration derives vigour, for the inclining of the will to a right choice, and for regulating the life.

1. Consider the end for which man was designed in his creation, why endued with rational and noble powers of soul, and placed by the Sovereign Maker in the highest rank of so numerous and various natures that fill the universe. Is it to raise an estate, to shine in pomp, to enjoy sensual pleasures for a little while, and after the fatal term to be no more for ever? Was he sent into the world upon as mean a business as that of the foolish emperor, who employed an army, furnished with all military preparations, to gather shells upon the sea shore? This were, according to the passionate expostulation of the psalmist, to charge God "that he had made all men in vain." Reason and scripture tell us the end of man is to glorify and enjoy God, the obtaining whereof makes him perfectly happy, and the missing of it perfectly miserable. This is a fundamental truth upon which the whole fabric of man's duty and felicity is built. Without this foundation, our faith presently sinks. If the clearness of this principle be obscured, we shall wander from the way of eternal life, and not only lose the way, but the remembrance and desire of it. Thinking is the property of the reasonable soul, and the just order of consideration is, that the mind primarily regards the supreme directive truth that is to govern all our actions. It was prudent counsel that * one of the ancients

* Primum ego scriptoris officium existimo, ut titulum suum legat, atq; identidem interrogat se, quid cœperit scribere.

gave for composing a book, that the author frequently reflect upon the title, that it may correspond in all the parts with his original design. Thus it becomes a man often to consider the end of his being, that the course of his life may have a direct tendency to it; and the more excellent our end is, the more constraining is the necessity to prosecute it. It is of great efficacy to reflect upon ourselves, whither do my thoughts and desires tend? For what do I spend my strength, and consume my days? Will it be my last account, how much by my prudence and diligence I have exceeded others in temporal acquisitions? If a general were at play while the armies are engaging, would it be a noble exploit for him to win the game, whilst his army for want of conduct loses the victory? Will it be profitable for a man to gain the world, and lose his soul? Let conscience answer in truth.

It is observable what is reported of a * noble foreigner, that on his birth-day reflecting upon the age of his life, he was surprised with grief, and struck with astonishment, that without a due sense of the proper business and end of life, he was arrived to that age, when our days begin to decline. In an instant all things seemed to change appearance in his view. Then first (says he) I perceived I was a man, for before I had not resolved for what I should employ my life. The issue was, his serious resolution unfeignedly to honour God, sincerely to confess Christ, to place his felicity in holiness of life, and most zealously to follow it. Let any one that is not of a reprobate mind, and an incorrigibly depraved heart, duly consider the sublime and supernatural end of man. O what a marvellous change will it make in him, of carnal into spiritual? Nay, it would be a kind of miracle if he continued in his sinful state. How will it transform him into another man, with new valuations, new affections and resolutions, as if he were "born again" with a new soul? How will it amaze him that his whole course has been a contradiction to the wise and gracious design of God, that all his industry has

* Cum natalis dies Februarii admonuisset ætatis numerandæ; & tricesimo reperissem, invasit me subita mœstitia, & perculsit admirantem, quomodo sine sensu vitæ ad ejus culmen pervenissem, a quo lux quælibet fit obscurior, & dies nostri ad occasum inclinare incipiunt. Visa est mihi rerum facies momento mutata, & tunc primum me hominem agnovi. *Memoires Chanut.*

been a race out of the way, a perpetual diversion from his main business, that his life has been fruitless and dead to the true end of it? How will he be confounded at his former folly? Then alone we act with understanding, when moved by our blessed end, and our actions by a strict tendency without variation issue into it.

2. Consider attentively the objects that stand in competition for our choice, the present world and heaven, to make a judicious comparison between them in their quality and duration.

(1.) In their quality. The things of the world, according to the judgment of God himself, who is only wise and good, and has the highest authority to decide in the case, are but fallacious appearances of happiness, mere vanity. And certainly the Creator knows the true worth of all things, and would not disparage his own works, but would undeceive men that are apt to judge and choose by the eye of sense. The apostle tells us, "that an idol is nothing in the world:" although the matter of it may be of gold, or marble, or wood, yet it has no divine perfection, which the idolater attributes to it. So all worldly things, in which men place their chief care, and confidence, and joy, though they have some degrees of goodness, and are a transient relief to us in our passage to eternity, yet they are nothing as to perfect felicity. It is merely opinion and conceit that makes them so valued and pleasing, like a rich dye to a slight stuff from whence its price arises. Reason is either obscured, or not obeyed when the world is the object of our choice. Now what are these appearances of beauty and pleasure, compared with a blessedness that is truly infinite? Carnal joy smiles in the countenance, flatters the fancy, touches the sense, but cannot fill the heart; but the favour of God satisfies the soul. "Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than when their corn and wine increased." Carnal joy in its highest elevation, in the time of the harvest and vintage, is incomparably less than spiritual joy that springs from the light of God's countenance. The world cannot fill the narrow capacity of our senses, but divine joys exceed our most enlarged comprehensive faculties. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; but the peace of God passes all understanding." The things of the world are of a limited goodness: wisdom is not strength, nor learning riches, nor beauty fruitfulness: but God is a "universal

good," in whom are all attractives to raise and satisfy our desires. If men did consider, they would distinguish and despise in comparison all that is named felicity here, with the favour of God. To seek for satisfaction in the creature and forsake him, is as if one desirous to see the light should withdraw from the presence of the sun, to borrow it from a weak ray reflected by some obscure matter. Now if there be so vast a difference in their nature, as between a painted vapour, and the solid glorious good, between finite and infinite, why is there not a difference accordingly in our esteem, affections and respects to them? How unreasonable is it that a soul capable of God, should cleave to the dust? It would be most egregious folly to hang a weight, that is able to turn a great engine, upon a small clock: it is incomparably more foolish, when the love of happiness, the weight of human nature, which applied aright, will turn our desires to heaven, is only used to give vigorous motion to our endeavours about earthly things.

(2.) Consider their duration. The apostle tells us, that the main "scope of his actions was things invisible;" and gives the reason of it, "for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4. 18. To insist upon the vast difference between temporal and eternal, may seem needless: for the first notions of things are of such uncontrolable clearness, that an attempt to prove them, is to light a candle to discover the sun. Yet this principle drawing after it such powerful consequences for the government of our hearts and lives, and conscience being so remiss, and the sensual affections so rebellious, it is needful to consider this seriously, that what is really assented to in speculation, may not be contradicted in practice. Now who can unfold the infinite volume of ages in eternity? The understanding of an angel can no more comprehend what is incomprehensible, than the mind of a man. A snail will pass over an immense space as soon as an eagle: for though one dispatches more way than the other, yet both are equally distant from arriving to the end of what is endless. But that the conception of eternity may be more distinct, and affecting, it is useful to represent it under some temporal resemblances, that sensibly, though not fully, express it. Suppose that the vast ocean were distilled drop by drop, but so slowly, that a thousand years should pass between every drop; how many millions of years

were required to empty it? Suppose this great world in its full compass, from one pole to another, and from the top of the firmament to the bottom, were to be filled with the smallest sand, but so slowly, that every thousand years only a single grain should be added; how many millions would pass away before it were filled? If the immense superficies of the heavens, wherein are innumerable stars, the least of which equals the magnitude of the earth, were filled with figures of numbers without the least vacant space, and every figure signified a million, what created mind could tell their number, much less their value? Having these thoughts, I reply; the sea will be emptied drop by drop, the universe filled grain by grain, the numbers written in the heavens will come to an end; and how much of eternity is then spent? Nothing; for still infinitely more remains. In short, whatever is temporal, extends the continuance of it to the utmost possibility of conception, is infinitely short of eternity. A day, a hour, a minute, has some proportion with a thousand years; for that duration is determined by a certain number of days, and hours, and minutes: but millions of ages have no proportion to eternity, because it is an indeterminable duration. The mind is soon tired and lost in searching after numbers to represent it: it is confounded and struck with amazing horror, and can only direct the eye upward or downward to the two habitations of eternity, the glorious and the miserable, heaven and hell. Now let us compare the things of the present world with those of the future state. The first are measured by flying time, the other remain in an unmoveable eternity. The comforts that spring from the earth, suddenly wither and fall to it: the tree of life flourishes only above. Frequent changes from prosperity to adversity, are the properties of this mortal state. As those who are in voyages at sea, sometimes are in a calm, and presently suffer a storm, and are forced to alter their course by the changing of the winds; so it is with us in our passage here. But upon the first entrance into another world, all the variations of this are at an end. "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity. Surely every man walks in a vain show, surely they are disquieted in vain." The visible felicity of man is of no continuance. We may frequently observe in the evening, a cloud by the reflection of the sun invested with so bright a lustre, and adorned with such a pleasant variety of colours, that in the

judgment of our eyes, if an angel were to assume a body correspondent to his glory, it were a fit matter for it. But in walking a few steps, the sun is descended beneath the horizon, and the light withdrawn, and of all that splendid flaming appearance, nothing remains but a dark vapour, that falls down in a shower. Thus vanishing is the show of felicity here. In this, sense assists faith; for the experience of every day verifies what the scripture declares, "that the fashion of this world passes away." And therefore the guilty folly of men is aggravated, "to set their eyes and hearts upon that which is not." To see one passionately doat on a face ruined and deformed with age, to be enchanted without a charm, raises wonder, and exposes to contempt. Yet such is the stupidity of men to embrace with their most entire affections the withered vanities of the world, that are hastening to their period. It was a stinging reproach to idolaters from God, "None considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding," to say, "I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, I have also baked bread upon the coals thereof: I have roasted flesh and eaten it; and shall I make the residue an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?" And are not sensual men equally guilty of such monstrous folly? for though universal experience convinces them, that all things under the sun are fading, and that many times their dearest comforts are snatched away from their embraces; yet who does advisedly consider, and say to himself, shall I give my heart to transient shadows? Shall I cherish vain hopes, vain aims and desires of obtaining happiness in a perishing world? Although the worshipping a stock be idolatry of grosser infamy, yet it is as foolish, and as destructive to set our chief love and joy, that is only due to God, upon the creature. And what follows in the prophet, is justly applicable to such persons; "he feedeth on ashes," (that not only afford no nourishment, but are very hurtful to the body) "a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?" Thus carnal men are so blinded with their affections to these short-lived pleasures, that they cannot take the true liberty of judging and reflecting that they are deceived and delighted with empty shadows that will suddenly end in disappointment and sorrow? Briefly, these glittering fictions and false joys cannot please without an error in the mind, that

shall last but a little while. And if you saw a distracted person sing and dance, with a conceit that he is a prince, would you be willing to lose sober reason for his phantastic pleasure, especially if you knew that his cheerful fit should suddenly change into a mournful or raging madness for ever? But the blessedness above is unchangeable as God the author and object of it, eternal as the soul that enjoys it. And shall the "world that passes away with the lusts thereof, turn our affections from the undefiled immortal inheritance?" Shall the vanishing appearance, the fleeting figure of happiness, be preferred before what is substantial and durable? If a spark of true reason, of sincere love to our souls be left, "we shall count all things but dross and dung, that we may gain the kingdom of glory." Thus eternity enlightens, thus it counsels us.

CHAP. XIV.

Other motives to seek the kingdom of heaven, God is very willing men should partake of his glory. All who unfeignedly and earnestly seek, shall obtain it. Heaven is promised upon gracious terms. An answer to the carnal allegation, that we are commanded to pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand, and to submit to the sharpest sufferings. Fervent and constant prayer for divine grace, that we may fix our aims upon eternal happiness, and be diligent in the use of the means to obtain it. The grace of the Spirit requisite to convince the mind thoroughly of the reality and greatness of an invisible and future happiness. It is requisite to purify the will and affections, that with full consent the soul may desire and prosecute its blessed end.

TO encourage us to seek the kingdom of heaven, I shall propound other motives to consideration.

1. God is very willing that men should be saved and partake of his glory. For this end, "he has brought life and immor-

tality to light in the gospel." The Lord Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, has dispelled the darkness of the Gentiles, and the shadows of the Jews, and rendered the blessed and eternal state so clear and so visible, that every eye may see it. Our assurance of it is upon infallible principles. And though the excellent glory of it is inexpressible, yet it is represented under variety of fair and lovely types to invite our affections. Besides, God makes an earnest offer of life to us in his word; he commands, counsels, excites, urges, nay entreats and beseeches with infinite tenderness, that men will accept of it. Thus the apostle declares, "now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God." Is it not evident then beyond the most jealous suspicion, God is desirous of our happiness? Can we imagine any design, any insincerity in his words? Why should heaven court a worm? It is his love to souls that expresses itself in that condescending compassionate manner, to melt and overcome the perverse and hardened in sin.

And as his words, so his works are a convincing argument of his will: his most gracious sustaining and supporting of sinful men, his innumerable benefits conferred upon them, in the provision of good, and preservation from evil, are for this end, that by the conduct of his merciful providence they may be led to repentance, and received into his favour. And the temporal judgments inflicted on sinners, are medicinal in their nature, and in his design to bring them to a sight and abhorrence of sin, to prevent their final ruin: if they prove mortal to any, it is from their obstinate corruption. The time allowed to those who are obnoxious to his justice every hour, is not a mere reprieve from torment, but a space of repentance to sue out a pardon: they are spared in order to salvation. "The Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3. 9.

But, above all his other works, the giving of his Son to be a sacrifice for sin, is an incomparable demonstration how much he delights in the salvation of men. Since God has been at such cost to put them into a capacity of obtaining the kingdom of unchangeable glory, far transcending the earthly paradise that was forfeited by sin, we have the strongest assurance that he desires their felicity. And how guilty and miserable will those sinners

be, that when Christ has opened heaven to us by his blood, refuse to enter into it? When Brutus, the most noble Roman, propounded to a philosopher his design to restore Rome to liberty, he replied, that the action would be glorious indeed, but that so many servile spirits that tamely stooped under tyranny, were not worthy that a man of virtue and courage should hazard himself to recover that for them, which they did so lightly esteem. The redemption of mankind is without controversy the master-piece of God's works, wherein his principal attributes appear in their excellent glory. But how astonishing is the unworthiness of men, who wretchedly neglect salvation, which the Son of God purchased by a life full of sorrows, and a death of infinite sufferings? Blessed Redeemer! May it be spoken with the humble, affectionate, and thankful sense of thy dying love, why didst thou give thyself a ransom for those who are charmed with their misery, and with the most foul ingratitude disvalue so precious a redemption? How justly shall they be for ever deprived of it? "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish."

2. Consider, this glorious blessedness shall be the portion of all that unfeignedly choose it, and earnestly seek it. This motive was inclosed in the first, but deserves a separate consideration. And of this we have infallible assurance from the word of God, "who cannot lie. Godliness has the promise of the life to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." The hope of a christian is so certain, that it is compared to "an anchor fastened in heaven." And besides the fidelity of his word, God has given us security of the reward, the life of his Son. This methinks should turn the current of our desires and endeavours to heaven. For notwithstanding all our toil and sweat, the labour of the day and the watchings of the night for the obtaining earthly things, yet we many times fall short of our aims and hopes. It was the observation of the wisest man, "I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to all." Indeed such is the order of divine providence in the world, there must be different conditions of men here: some rich, others poor; some noble, others mean; some in command, others in subjection. And from hence it is also evident, that neither dignity, nor riches, nor pleasures are

the happiness of man. For it is not becoming the wisdom and goodness of God to make that the last end of the reasonable creature, which though sought with sincerity and diligence, may not be obtained, or of which without his own consent he may be deprived. But civil distinctions and qualities are of no value and consideration with respect to the obtaining or excluding from heaven. The rich and honourable that are in an exalted state, have not a more easy ascent and entrance into the kingdom of God than those who are in the lowest degree. The stars appear with the same bigness to him that stands in the deepest valley as on the highest hill. Is there any difference between the souls of the rich and great in the world, and the souls of the poor and despised? Are they not equally the offspring of God, and equally ransomed by the most precious blood of his Son? Are they not equally capable of eternal rewards? Are not the promises of the heavenly kingdom, equally addressed to every one that has an immortal soul, that is faithful to his duty and covenant with God? This should inspire all with flaming desires, and draw forth their utmost industry, "and make them steadfast and unmoveable, always to abound in the work of the Lord, knowing our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

I know the carnal will is impetuous and impatient of delay; and earnest for what is present, with the neglect of the future glory. But the unreasonableness of this is evident to all: for it is not a new and strange thing to sow in hopes of reaping a harvest, for men to be industrious and active on land and sea for future advantage. Nay, it is the constant practice of the world: the merchant, the husbandman, the student, the soldier; and every man in the circle of his calling are visible instances of this; and though many times the most flourishing hopes are blasted, they are not discouraged. And is it not a sight full of wonder, to observe men cheerful in labours and hardships in the service of the world, to carry it so lightly as if they had wings, and all for a poor and uncertain recompence, and to be slow and languid in their endeavours for a reward as great and as sure as God is glorious and true? How many ambitiously strive to please a prince, and wait long in his service, who is but a man, and therefore variable in his temper and state, sometimes is not willing to do what he can, and sometimes cannot do what he would to reward his servants? And is there not infinitely more reason we

should labour to please God, who is the most liberal, and rich, and "certain rewarder of all that seek him?"

2. Consider how gracious the terms are upon which heaven is promised in the gospel. Our Saviour's laws are so holy, just, and in their own nature so good to men, even in their present performance, that their own excellence, and equity, and sweetness, is sufficient to recommend them without a respect to the glorious reward of obedience. For what can be more desirable than conformity to the nature of the blessed God? What pleasure is comparable to that which springs from a pure conscience, from a godly, righteous and sober conversation? How joyful is the performance of that service which more immediately is directed to the honour of the divine majesty? In prayer, and other sacred actions, we draw near to the fountain of felicity, and receive from his fulness. In the affectionate praises of God, we are companions of the angels. And are not integrity and honesty in our dealings with men more easy and comfortable than fraud and oppression? Is it not troublesome to be always under a mask, to use arts and disguises to avoid the reproach and revenge that attend unjust actions when discovered? Are temperance and chastity as hurtful to the body, as luxury and lasciviousness, the essential parts of carnal felicity? How miserable is man when the heart is rent with numberless vanities, the affections distracted between various objects! How quiet and composed, when the heart is united to God as the supreme good, and the affections joyfully conspire in his service! Can it then be pretended that the yoke of Christ is heavy, and his law hard? Or are his promises uncertain, and his reward small? No, "his commands are not grievous; in the keeping them there is a great reward," a present paradise. Religion will make us happy hereafter in the enjoyment of God, and happy here in obedience to his holy will. Such is his goodness, that our duty and happiness are the same.

But it will be said, that the gospel requires "us to pluck out the right eye, and to cut off the right hand, and to take up the cross of Christ; that is, to mortify the dearest lusts, and to submit to the sharpest sufferings for his honour, that we may be eternally happy.

To this I answer:

It is true, the human nature in this depraved state, only re-

lishes such objects as pleasantly insinuate with the carnal senses, and it is bitter as death to bind up the affections from them. But grace gives a "new divine nature to the soul," and makes it easy to abstain from fleshly lusts. To make this more clear by a sensible instance: suppose a diseased person, whose stomach is oppressed with corrupt humours, and his throat and mouth so heated with choler and continual thirst, that he thinks it impossible, though for his life, to abstain from immoderate drinking. If a physician by some powerful medicine cleanses the stomach, and tempers the internal heat, he then can easily restrain himself from excess. Thus a carnal man that is full of false estimations, and irregular desires, while there are pleasures without, and passions unsubdued within, though his salvation depends on it, thinks it impossible to restrain the exorbitant appetites of flesh and blood. The "Gentiles thought it strange, christians did not run with them to the same excess of riot." But divine grace so clarifies and enlightens the mind, so purifies and elevates the affections, that it is not only possible, but easy to abstain from unlawful pleasures. St. Austin before his conversion was astonished, that many in the vigour of youth, and in a frail world lived chastely; and reflecting upon himself, was encouraged by this thought, that which such and such observe, why shall it be impossible to me to observe? and upon serious trial, by the prosperous influence of heaven, was a conqueror over all carnal temptations. * Nay after his holy change, the withholding his heart from vitious delights, was inexpressibly more sweet than his former enjoying of them. And are there not many visible examples of holy heavenly christians, to whom grosser sensual pleasures are unsavory and contemptible? You may as well tell the number of the stars, as of those who have practised religion in its strictness and purity, and by their enlightened conversations directed us in the way to heaven. And are their bodies taken from the vein of a rock, and not composed of flesh and blood as well as others? Are their passions, like Solomon's brazen sea, unmoveable by any winds of temptations? Are they entirely exempted from the impression of objects, and the lower affections? No, they are alive, and sensible of those things that ravish the affections of carnal men, but by the power of grace despise and

* Quam suave carere suavetatibus istis?

overcome them. And this grace is offered in the gospel to all that sincerely desire it, so that it is a vain wretched pretence that religion binds to hard service.

To the other part of the objection, that sometimes religion exposes the professors of it to heavy sufferings, I answer; indeed the gospel is plain and peremptory in this, if we will "reign with Christ, we must suffer with him," when we are called forth to give a noble testimony to his truth. It is no extraordinary elevation, no point of perfection, but the duty of every christian to be always ready in the disposition and resolution of his mind, to sacrifice his life when the honour of Christ requires it. But it is no hard condition to suffer transient afflictions for the obtaining a happy immortality, to be conformable to the image of our suffering Redeemer, that we may be crowned with his glory. How many christians esteemed themselves honoured in the disgrace, and blessed in the injuries they suffered for Christ, and with an invincible patience, and astonishing joy, endured the most cruel persecutions, though yet the human nature in them was as tender, and sensible of pains as in others? But the natural aversion, and repugnance to suffering was overruled by the determination of the rational will, upon the account of their duty, and the reward attending it. They gave a most convincing sensible testimony how much more valuable heaven is, than this present world, willingly exposing themselves to all evil here, "and rejoicing in hope" of a glorious issue.

In short; the reward of obedience is a triumphal crown; and where there is no victory, there can be no triumph; and where no combat, no victory; and where no enemy, no combat. Therefore we are commanded to fight against our internal enemies, our corrupt affections, to kill the lusts of the flesh, and to encounter and overcome, by humility and meek submission, the cruelty of malicious enemies without us, in order to obtain the crown of life. And a believer that has heaven in taste and expectation, will easily renounce the most pleasant, and willingly endure the sharpest temptations, for the blessed reward of his obedience.

Lastly, Fervent and constant prayer is requisite for the grace of God, that we may fix our aims aright upon eternal happiness, and use those sure means that with divine advantage are proposed in the scriptures, that can make us wise to salvation. Such

is the depravation of man since his fall, the mind is diverted by vain thoughts, and the heart prepossessed with sensual desires, that till "the spirit of his mind be renewed," and his original affections to the supreme good be revived and restored by divine grace, he is regardless of it, and only applies himself to what is pleasing to sense. There may be some transient glances, and volatile wishes of heaven in carnal men, but they are miserably weak, and ineffectual. Therefore a most necessary duty incumbent upon us, is by humble and fervent prayer to address ourselves to God for his spirit, to enlighten our minds, that we may believe the reality and greatness of the eternal reward; and to reform our wills, that we may feel its attractive force. Both these acts of the Spirit are requisite, that the love of God, as our chief felicity, may be the regent principle of our hearts and lives.

1. For this end the Holy Spirit convinces men thoroughly of the reality and greatness of an invisible and future happiness. In the light of the gospel, how many of eminent intellectual faculties are stupid as to their great interest, and spend themselves about trifles, and are equally tractable to eternal ruin, as the ox to the slaughter? He that is destitute of the illuminating grace of the Spirit, "is blind, and cannot see afar off." Now by the analogy between the corporeal and intellectual faculties, we may understand in some measure how the mind is illuminated by the Spirit of God. For as to the act of seeing, two things are requisite; 1. External light in the air, without which the colours, figures and beauties of objects are not visible to the sharpest eye, but lie obscured under impenetrable darkness. 2. Internal light in the eye, in which the visive power consists: if this be extinguished, the clearest light of heaven is of no use for the discovery of things. Thus the understanding is enabled to see spiritual things. 1. By the revelation of the object: in this respect "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." Till that bright discovery was made of eternal blessedness, it was above the desires and hopes of sinful man. *Cœlum, homo nec optare poterat ex ignorantia, nec sperare ex propriæ miseriæ conscientia.* 2. By the inward enlightening "from the Spirit of wisdom," that removes the ignorance, prejudice, and inadvertency of the mind, which as scales darkened its sight, and disposes it to perceive the verity and excellency of spiritual and future things, though not with comprehensive evidence, yet with that

assurance, that no doubtfulness or suspence remains concerning them. It is observable that faith is expressed in scripture, by "prudence, wisdom, and knowledge," whereby a man knows the grounds and motives of his judgment and actions. And sin is called folly. For as when the understanding faculty, either from the indisposedness of the organs, as in idiots, or from the disorder of fancy, by inflammation of the humours, as in distracted persons, cannot weigh and compare, and therefore makes a perverse judgment of things; so the carnal mind, by not due measuring and pondering, judges falsely of spiritual things. If something no bigger than the hand were put before the eye, it would intercept the sight of the heavens; and he that not considering the properties of things near and distant, should conclude that piece to be bigger than the heavens, were justly reputed a fool. And the folly of carnal men is more gross, who prefer things present to sense, before what is future and of everlasting consequence to the soul. But there are some actions, which if done by a natural, would be counted folly; yet being done by those who in the reputation of the world are wise, are esteemed prudent, but they are the most deplorable folly. Now as the restoring the *Læsum principium*, the broken mind to its sound state, whereby it is able to consider, discern and conclude of things according to their nature, such is the action of God's Spirit upon the corrupt mind, clarifying and enlightening it, so that it receives full conviction by the clearest marks of divine authority shining in the gospel, of the truth of all the great and precious promises therein contained, and causing it, by a steady application of the thoughts, to see the vast difference between what is temporal, and eternal; how despicably light all the vanities of this world are found, when put in the balance against the infinite inestimable happiness of the next. In short, the renewed mind knows spiritual things according to their nature and qualities, believes, esteems, and determines that they are of eternal moment, and absolutely necessary for the happiness of man. And as when the natural faculty of seeing is perished, it is irreparable by human skill, and without a miracle can never be restored; so the intellectual faculty, when darkened by sinful lusts, without the renewing power of the Spirit, "can never know spiritual things as they ought to be known." Therefore as the blind men in the gospel, who despaired of help from the physicians, hearing of the miraculous power of Christ, importunately begged his healing mercy; so let

us pray to the Light and Saviour of the world, but in a more noble and higher sense, "Lord, that we may receive our sight." Let us with the most zealous affections call upon "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that he would give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

(2.) The efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit is requisite to change the will, that with a free and full consent it may desire and prosecute the spiritual eternal good. Without this, the conviction of the mind is not powerful enough to convert the soul from the love of the world, to choose heaven. There may be an enlightened conscience without a renewed heart. Though the judgment assents that God is the supreme good, "yet till the heart be circumcised," the sensuality of the affections taken away, divine love that directs the life to God as our blessed end, can never possess it. Suppose that men had a sensible and strong assurance of the eternal state hereafter, if all those who lived godly in a visible manner ascended with Elias to heaven, and if all who continued in their sins visibly descended into hell, as Corah and his company were swallowed up alive by the earth before the Israelites; if men could hear the joyful exultations of the saints above, their high praises of God, and hear the desperate cries and deep complaints of the damned: if one according to the desire of the rich man, were sent from hell, and with his fiery tongue relate what he had seen and suffered, and exhibit a sensible demonstration in himself of those torments, yet this alone were not sufficient to draw off their hearts from the deceitful happiness of this world, and fasten them on the perfect and eternal happiness in the text. Indeed they could not then indulge their lusts so securely, but they "would be strangers to the life of God," such an inveterate alienation of heart is in men from real holiness. Till the sanctifying Spirit by a directive persuasive light, that represents the truth and goodness of spiritual things, transforms the soul, and makes it spiritual in its valuations and affections, it is inwardly averse from grace and glory. "The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

ON HELL.

MARK IX. 48.

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,

CHAP. I.

The opening of the text. The punishment of unreformed sinners shall be extreme and eternal. The torments in hell exceed the heaviest judgments inflicted here. They are represented in scripture, so as to instruct and terrify sinners. The soul shall be the chief mourner in hell. The apprehension shall be enlarged to all afflicting objects. The thoughts shall be fixed upon what is tormenting. All the tormenting passions will be let loose upon the guilty soul. Shame, sorrow, rage, despair, at once seize on the damned.

THE words are the repetition of a powerful motive, by our blessed Saviour, to deter men from indulging temptations to sin, how grateful or useful soever to them: "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; if thy eye offend thee, pluck it out." All the occasions whereby sin insinuates itself, and inflames our inclinations, whether it bribes us with profit, or allures by pleasure, must be immediately cut off, and for ever separated from us. This counsel seems very severe to the natural man, who freely converses with temptations: to do violence to himself, and tear his beloved lusts from his bosom,

the carnal nature will not consent to. Our Saviour therefore urges such arguments as may move the understanding and affections, may strike sense and conscience: "For it is better to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, where the fire never shall be quenched." Hope and fear are the most active passions: the hope of heaven is motive enough to induce a true believer to despise and reject all the advantages and pleasures of sin that are but for a season: and the fear of an everlasting hell, is strong enough to control the vicious appetites. * Reason determines, that when a gangrene that is deadly and spreading, has seized upon a member, presently to cut off an affected arm or leg, to save the rest: how much more reasonable and necessary is it to part with the most charming and favourite sin, to preserve the soul from eternal death? It is observable, our Saviour inculcates three times, that men may take notice of it with terror, "Where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched:" a worm gnawing upon the bowels, that are of the most tender and quick sense, fire that causes the most vehement pain, are fearful representations to typify the torments of the damned: and that the worm is undying, and the fire unquenchable, infinitely aggravates their punishment.

The proposition is this: that the punishment of those who will retain their pleasant or profitable sins, shall be extreme and eternal. In the handling of this point, I will discourse of the extremity of the punishment;—And the eternity of it.

I. The *extremity* of the punishment.

Before the particular description of the pains of the damned, I shall observe in general, that the full representation of hell is beyond all human expression; nay our most fearful thoughts cannot equal the horror of it. "Who knows the power of thine anger?" Psal. 90. 11. What are the prepared plagues, by infinite justice and Almighty wrath, for obstinate sinners? It is impossible for the most guilty and trembling conscience to enlarge its sad apprehensions according to the degrees of that misery. "The Lord will show forth his wrath, and make his power known in the vessels fitted for destruction." None can tell what God can do, and what man can suffer, when made capable to

* Ut corpus redimas, ferrum patietis & ignes: ut valeas animo, quicquam tolerare negabis? At pretium pars hæc corpore majus habet. *Ovid.*

endure such torments for ever, as now would presently consume him. As the glory of heaven cannot be fully understood till enjoyed, so the torments of hell cannot be comprehended till felt. But we may have some discovery of those unknown terrors, by the following considerations.

The most heavy judgments of God upon sinners here, are light and tolerable in comparison of the punishment of sinners in the next state. For,

1. Temporal evils of all kinds and degrees, as pestilence, famine, war, are designed for the bringing of men to a sight and sense of their sins, and are common to good and bad here. And if his anger be so terrible when he chastises as a compassionate father, what is his fury when he punishes as a severe judge? If the correcting remedies ordered by his wisdom and love for the conversion of sinners be so sharp, what is the deadly revenge of his irreconcileable hatred?

2. The miseries of the present state are allayed with some enjoyments. None are so universally afflicted, so desolate, but something remains to sweeten the sense of their sufferings. Judgments are tempered with mercies. No man is tortured with all diseases, nor forsaken of all friends, nor utterly without comfort. And when the affliction is irremediable, yet if our grief produces sympathy in others, it is some ease to the troubled mind, and by that assistance the burden is made lighter. But in hell, the damned are surrounded with terrors, encompassed with flames, without any thing to refresh their sorrows, not a drop of water to a lake of fire. All that was esteemed felicity here, is totally withdrawn. Death puts a period to their lives and pleasures of sin for ever. For it is most just, that those objects which were abused by their lusts, and alienated their hearts from their duty and felicity, should be taken away. And which is extreme misery, in their most pitiful state, that they are absolutely unpitied. Pity is the cheap and universal lenitive, not denied to the most guilty in their sufferings here: for the law of nature instructs us to pity the man, when the malefactof suffers. But even this is not afforded to the damned. All their agonies and cries cannot incline the compassion of God, and the blessed spirits in heaven towards them: for they are not compassionable objects, their misery being the just effect of their perverse obstinate choice. And in hell all human tender affections are extin-

guished for ever. Now it is the perfection of misery, the excess of desolation, to be deprived of all good things pleasing to our desires, and to suffer all evils from which we have the deepest aversation and abhorrence. As in heaven all good is eminently comprised, and nothing but good; so in hell all evil is in excessive degrees, and nothing but evil.

Temporal evils are inflicted by the meditation of second causes that are of a limited power to hurt: but in the next world he more immediately torments the damned by his absolute power. The apostle tells us, that the wicked "are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." What is the lashing with a few rushes, to a blow given by the hand of a giant that strikes dead at once? This comparison is below the truth.

More particularly the state of misery is set forth in scripture by such representations as may powerfully instruct and terrify even the most carnal men. * Nothing is more intolerably painful, than suffering the violence of fire enraged with brimstone: and hell is described by a lake of fire and brimstone, wherein the wicked are tormented. Whether the fire be material or metaphorical, the reality and intenseness of the torments is signified by it. But the ordinary fire, though mingled with the most torturing ingredients, is not an adequate representation of it. For that is prepared by men, but the fire of hell is prepared by the wrath of God for the devil and his angels. The divine power is illustriously manifested in that terrible preparation: so that, as some of the fathers express it, if one of the damned might pass from those flames into the fiercest fires here, it were to exchange a torment for a refreshment. The scripture speaks of the vehe-

* Indeed it is difficult to conceive how a material fire can act on a spiritual substance. But it is unreasonable to determine that it is impossible. For if we consider what pain is, it is as conceivable how pure spirits are capable of it, as spirits in conjunction with bodies. The human soul in its nature is spiritual as the angels, yet has a painful sense of fire, or other afflicting evils incumbent on the senses. The body merely feels not pain, but it passes through the body to the soul. If the soul by a strong diversion of thoughts apply itself to an object, the body is insensible of pain, as is evident in some diseases; and that in the heat of battle, deep wounds are not felt. And as God by a natural constitution has ordered, that the body so touched and moved, excites a painful sense in the soul; he may have ordained that the devils shall feel the impressions of material fire, in the place to which they shall be confined.

ment heat and fiery thirst, and outer darkness in which the damned suffer, to satisfy the rights of justice in the torments of those senses, for the pleasures of which men wilfully broke the laws of God.

But the soul being the chief sinner, shall be the chief mourner in those regions of sorrow. An image of this we have in the agonies of spirit, which sometimes the saints themselves are in here, and which the most stubborn sinners can neither resist nor endure. Job was afflicted in that manner that he complains, "The arrows of the Almighty are with me, the poison whereof drinks up my spirit, the terrors of God set themselves in array against me." If a spark of his displeasure falls on the guilty conscience, it tears and blows up all, as a fire-ball cast into a magazine. Solomon, who understood the frame of human nature, tells us, "The spirit of a man can bear his infirmity;" that is, the mind fortified by principles of moral counsel and constancy, can endure the assault of external evils: but "a wounded spirit who can bear?" This is most insupportable when the sting and remorse of the mind is from the sense of guilt: for then God appears an enemy, righteous and severe; and who can encounter with offended Omnipotence? Such is the sharpness of his sword, and the weight of his hand, that every stroke is deadly inward. Satan, the cruel enemy of souls, exasperates the wounds. He discovers and charges sin upon the conscience with all its killing aggravations, and conceals the divine mercy, the only lenitive and balm to the wounded spirit. What visions of horror, what spectacles of fear, what scenes of sorrow are presented to the distracted mind by the prince of darkness? And, which heightens the misery, man is a worse enemy to himself than satan: he falls upon his own sword, and destroys himself. The guilty conscience turns "the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood:" the precious promises of the gospel, that assure favour and pardon to returning and relenting sinners, are turned into arguments of despair, by reflecting upon the abuse and provocation of mercy, that the advocate in God's bosom, is become the accuser. Whatever the soul wounded sinner sees or hears, afflicts him; whatever he thinks, torments him. All the diversions in the world, business, pleasures, merry conversation, comedies, are as ineffectual to give freedom from those stings and furies in the breast, as the sprink-

ling of holy water is to expel a raging devil from a possessed person. Those who in their pride and jollity, have despised serious religion, either as a fond transport and ecstacy towards God, or a dull melancholy and dejection about the soul, or an idle scrupulosity about indifferent things, yet when God has set their sins with all their killing circumstances in order before their eyes, how changed, how confounded are they at that apparition? How restless, with the dreadful expectation of the doom that attends them! Belshazzar in the midst of his cups, and herd of concubines, by a few words written on the wall, containing his process and judgment, was so terrified by his guilty jealous conscience, that his joints were loosed, nature sunk under the apprehension. Now all these troubles of mind are but the beginnings of sorrows, but the smoke of the infernal furnace, but earnests of that terrible sum which divine justice will severely exact of the wicked in hell.

Indeed these examples are rare, and not regarded by the most, and by some looked on as the effects of distraction: but to convince the bold and careless sinners, who never felt the stings of an awakened conscience, what extreme terrors seize upon the wicked in the other world, consider,

(1.) The apprehension shall be more clear and enlarged than in the present state. Now the soul is oppressed with a weight of clay, and in drowsiness and obscurity. The great things of eternity are of little force to convince the conscience, or persuade the affections. But then the soul shall work with the quickest activity. The mind shall by an irresistible light take a full view of all afflicting objects. The most stupid and unconcerned sinners shall then see and feel their ruined state, what a glorious felicity they have lost, what a misery they are plunged into, without any possibility of lessening it by false conceits, and receiving any relief by the error of imagination.

(2.) The mournful thoughts shall be always fixed upon what is tormenting. The soul in conjunction with the body, cannot always apply itself to one sort of objects. For the ministry of the sensible faculties is requisite to its operations. And the body must be supported by eating and drinking and rest, which interrupts troublesome thoughts. Besides, the variety of objects and accidents here avert the mind sometimes from what is afflicting. But the separate soul is in no dependance on the body, and after

their reunion, there shall be no necessity of food or sleep, or any other animal actions to support it, but it shall be restored to a new capacity for new torments, and preserved in that miserable state by the power of God. There will be nothing then to divert the lost soul from sad reflections upon its misery. There are no lucid intervals in hell.

(3.) All the tormenting passions will then be let loose at once upon the guilty creature. And if there be no single passion so weak, but heightened, will break the spirit, and render life so miserable, that a man will take sanctuary in the grave to escape; how miserable is the condition, when the most fierce and united passions war against the soul? This is signified by the "never-dying worm" that gnaws on the tenderest parts, and of quickest sense. Shame, sorrow, despair, fury, hatred and revenge, are some of that brood of vipers that torment the damned.

Shame is a passion of which human nature is very sensible, and this in the highest degree of confusion shall seize on the wicked. Dan. 12. 2. For all the just causes of shame shall then meet. The inward source of it is the consciousness of guilt, of turpitude and folly in the actions; and all these are the inseparable adjuncts of sin. * The guilty soul by a piercing reflection upon its crimes, has a secret shame of its degeneracy and unworthiness. The passion is increased, when a discovery is made of vile practices that defile and debase a man, expose to contempt and infamy, before persons of high quality and eminent virtue, whom we admire and reverence, and whose esteem we value. To be surprised in an unworthy action by such a person, disorders the blood, and transfuses a colour into the face, to cover it with a veil of blushing. And the more numerous the spectators are, the more the disgrace is aggravated. And if derision be joined with the ignominy, it causes extreme displeasure. O the universal confusion, the overpowering amazement that will seize on sinners in the great day of discovery, when all the works of darkness, all their base sensualities shall be revealed before God, angels and saints! When all the covers of shame shall be taken off, the excuses and denials, to extenuate or conceal their sins, shall vanish, and their breasts be transparent to

* Tacita sudant præcordia culpa. *Juv.*

the eyes of all! How will they be ashamed of their foul and permanent deformity in the light of that glorious presence? How will they be astonished to appear in all their pollutions before that bright and immense theatre? How will they be confounded to stand in all their guilt before that sublime and severe tribunal? How will they endure the upbraidings for all the sins which they have so wickedly committed, and the derision for the punishment they so deservedly suffer? The holy Judge will "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes. The righteous also shall see, and shall laugh at them;" lo these are the men that made not God their portion, but perishing vanities, that preferred sweet folly before severe wisdom. The devils will reproach them for that scornful advantage they had over them, that as children are seduced for things of lustre to part with real treasures, so they were easily persuaded for the trifles of time to exchange eternal happiness. "Whither will they cause their shame to go?" Jer. 14. 12. Those black sinners that here never change colour for their filthiness, that hardened by custom in sin, are impenetrable to shame, as the brute beasts that are absolutely destitute of reason; nay, that have not only overcome all tenderness, but "glory in their shame," shall glow at the manifestation of their sordid lusts, their vile servilities, and be covered with confusion, and the sense of it shall be revived in their minds for ever.

To open shame is joined the greatest inward sorrow. This passion, when violent, penetrates the soul in all its faculties, and fastens it to the afflicting object. When it dwells in the bosom, it gives an easy entrance to whatever cherishes and increases it, and rejects what might assuage and lessen the sense of the evil. The most pleasant things do not excite desire or joy, but exasperate grief. Like those animals that convert the best nourishment into their own poison; so deep sorrow receives mournful impressions from all things, and turns the sweetest comforts of life into wormwood and gall. The causes of sorrow are either the loss of some valued good, or the sense of some present evil. And the sorrow is more violent, as the cause is great in itself, and in the apprehension and tenderness of the sufferers. Now both these causes, with all the heavy circumstances that can multiply and aggravate sorrow, meet in hell the centre of misery.

The loss is inconceivably great. If Cain, when banished from the society of the saints, where God was publicly worshipped, and by spiritual revelations and visible apparitions, graciously made himself known, cried out in anguish of soul, "my punishment is greater than I can bear; from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive upon the earth:" how intolerable will the final separation from his glorious and joyful presence be? In the clear and transforming vision of his glory, and the intimate and indissoluble union with him by love, consist the perfection and satisfaction of the immortal soul. The felicity resulting from it, is as entire and eternal, as God is great and true, who has so often promised it in scripture. Now the damned are for ever excluded from the reviving presence of God. It is often seen how tenderly and impatiently the human spirit resents the loss of a dear relation. Jacob for the supposed death of Joseph, was so overcome with grief, that when all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him, he refused to be comforted, and said, "I will go down mourning to the grave." Indeed this overwhelming sorrow is both a sin and a punishment. * It is ordained by the righteous and unchangeable decree of God, that every inordinate affection in man should be his own tormentor. But if the loss of a poor frail creature for a short time be so afflicting, how insupportable will the sorrow be for the loss of the blessed God for ever? Who can fully conceive the extent and degrees of that evil? For an evil rises in proportion to the good of which it deprives us: it must therefore follow, that celestial blessedness being an infinite eternal good, the exclusion from it is proportionably evil. And as the felicity of the saints results from the fruition of God in heaven, and from comparison with the contrary state: so the misery of the damned arises both from the thoughts of lost happiness, and from the lasting pain that torments them.

It may be replied, if this be the utmost evil that is consequent to sin, the threatening of it is likely to deter but few from the pleasing their corrupt appetites: for carnal men have such gross and vitiated affections that are careless of spiritual happiness. "They cannot taste and see how good the Lord is."

* Jussisti Domine, & sic est, ut pœna sit sibi omnis inordinatus affectus. *Aug.*

To this a clear answer may be given: in the next state, where the wicked shall be for ever without those carnal objects that here deceive and delight them, when deprived of all things that please their voluptuous senses, their apprehensions will be changed; they shall understand what a happiness it is to enjoy God, and what a misery to be expelled from the celestial paradise. Our Saviour tells the Jews, "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Luke 15. 28. How will they pine with envy at the sight of that triumphant felicity, of which they shall never be partakers? To see that blessed company entering into the sacred mansions of light, will make the loss of heaven infinitely more discernible and terrible to the wicked, who shall be cast into "outer darkness," and for ever be deprived of communion with God and his saints. "Depart from me," will be as dreadful a part of the judgment, as "eternal fire."

With the loss of the most excellent good, the suffering of the most afflicting painful evil is joined. The sentence is, "depart ye cursed into everlasting fire." And if an imaginary sorrow conceived in the mind without a real external cause, as in melancholy persons, when gross vapours darken and corrupt the brightness and purity of the spirits that are requisite for its cheerful operations, is often so oppressing, that nature sinks under it; how insupportable will the sorrow of condemned sinners be, under the impression and sense of God's almighty and avenging hand, when it shall fully appear how pure and holy he is in his anger for sin, how just and dreadful in punishing sinners? It may be, the indulgent sinner may lessen his fear of hell, by fancying the number of sufferers will assuage the sense of their misery. But this is a foolish mistake; for the number of sufferers shall be so far from affording any relief, that the misery is aggravated by the company and communication of the miserable. Every one is surrounded with sorrows, and by the sights of woe about him, feels the universal grief. The weeping and wailing, the cries and dolorous expressions of all the damned, increase the torment and vexation of every one. As when the wind conspires with the flame, it is more fierce and spreading.

The concomitant of sorrow will be fury and rage against themselves, as the true causes of their misery. For God will make

such a discovery of his righteous judgment, that not only the saints shall glorify his justice in the condemnation of the wicked, but they shall be so convinced of it, as not to be able to charge their Judge with any defect of mercy, or excess of rigour in his proceedings against them. As the man in the parable of the marriage feast, when taxed for his presumptuous intrusion without a wedding-garment, "How camest thou in hither?" was speechless: so they will find no plea for their justification and defence, but must receive the eternal doom with silence and confusion. Then conscience shall revive the bitter remembrance of all the methods of divine mercy for their salvation, that were ineffectual by their contempt and obstinacy. All the compassionate calls by his word, with the holy motions of the Spirit, were like the sowing of seed in the stony ground, that took no root, and never came to perfection. All his terrible threatenings were but as thunder to the deaf, or lightning to the blind, that little affects them: the bounty of his providence designed "to lead them to repentance," had the same effect as the showers of heaven upon briars and thorns, that make them grow the faster. And that a mercy so ready to pardon, did not produce in them a correspondent affection of grateful obedient love; but by the most unworthy provocations they plucked down the vengeance due to obstinate rebels, will so enrage the damned against themselves, that they will be less miserable by the misery they suffer, than by the conviction of their torn minds, that they were the sole causes of it. "What repentings will be kindled within them," for the stupid neglect of "the great salvation" so dearly purchased, and earnestly offered to them. What a fiery addition to their torment, that when God was so willing to save them, they were so wilful to be damned? They will never forgive themselves, that for the short and mean pleasures of sense, which if enjoyed a thousand years, cannot recompense the loss of heaven, nor requite the pains of hell for an hour, they must be deprived of the one, and suffer the other for ever.

The sorrow and rage will be increased by despair: for when the wretched sinner sees the evil is peremptory, and no outlet of hope, he abandons himself to the violence of sorrow, and by cruel thoughts wounds the heart more, than the fiercest furies in hell can. This misery that flows from despair, shall be more

fully opened under the distinct consideration of the eternity of hell. Briefly, as the blessed are in heaven, and heaven is in them, by those holy and joyful affections that are always exercised in the divine presence; so the damned are in hell, and hell is in them by those fierce and miserable passions that continually prey upon them.

CHAP. II.

The eternity of misery makes it most intolerable. The justice of God cleared in the eternal punishment of sinners for temporary sins. The wisdom of God requires that the punishment threatened should be powerful to preserve the commands of the law inviolable. There is an inseparable connexion between the choice and actions of man here, and their condition for ever. The damned are unqualified for any favour. The immense guilt of sin requires a proportion in the punishment.

II. THE *eternity* of the punishment.

The eternity of their misery makes it above all other considerations intolerable. Our Saviour repeats it thrice in the space of a few verses, to terrify those who spare some favourite corruption, "that in hell their worm dies not, and the fire is never quenched." God will never reverse his sentence, and they shall never change their state. How willingly would carnal men raze the word *eternal* out of the scriptures; but to their grief they find it joined with the felicity of heaven, and the torments of hell. The second death has all the terrible qualities of the first, but not the ease and end it brings to misery. All the tears of those forlorn wretches shall never quench one spark of the fire. Where are the delicious fare, the music, the purple, and all the carnal delights of the rich man? they are all changed into a contrary state of misery; and that state is fixed for ever. From his

vanishing paradise he descended into an everlasting hell. In this the vengeance of God is infinitely more heavy than the most terrible execution from men. Human justice and power can inflict but one death (that will be soon dispatched) upon a malefactor worthy to suffer a hundred deaths; if he be condemned to the fire, they cannot make him live and die together, to burn and not be consumed. But God will so far support the damned in their torments, that they shall always have strength to feel, though no strength patiently to endure them. Those extreme torments which would extinguish the present life in a moment, shall be suffered for ever. This consideration infinitely aggravates the misery: for the lost soul, racked with the fearful contemplation of what it must suffer for ever, feels, as it were at once, all the evils that shall torment it in its whole duration. The perpetuity of the misery is always felt by prevision. This is as the cruel breaking of the bones upon the wheel, when the soul is tormented by the foresight of misery, that without allays shall continue in the circulation of eternal ages. To make this more sensible, let us consider, that pain makes the mind observant of the passing of the hours. In pleasures, time with a quick and silent motion, insensibly slides away; but in troubles the hours are tedious; in violent pains we reckon the minutes as long. It is observable, how passionately the afflicted psalmist complains, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Psal. 77. 7. In what various pathetic forms does he express the same affection? Though he had assurance that the gracious God would not be always severe, yet his anguish forced from him complaints, as if the moment of his trouble were an eternity. But what strains of sorrow are among the damned, who besides the present sense of their misery, have always in their thoughts the vast eternity wherein they must suffer it?

When three terrible evils were propounded to David's choice, pining famine for three years, or bloody war for three months, or devouring pestilence for three days; he chose the shortest, though in itself the heaviest evil.

Many sad days must pass under the other judgments, where death by anticipation in such variety of shapes would be presented to the mind, that the lingering expectation of it would afflict

more than the sudden stroke; whereas the fury of the pestilence would be soon over. But the damned have not this relief, "but shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." How earnestly "do they seek for death," but cannot find it? What a favour would they esteem it to be annihilated? For certainly, if when the evils in the present state are so multiplied, that no comfort is left, or so violent that the afflicted person cannot enjoy them, and refresh his sorrowful spirit, death is chosen rather than life; it cannot be imagined that in the future state, where the misery is extreme, and nothing remains to allay it, that the damned should be in love with the unhappy good of simple being, and not choose an absolute extinction if it might be.

If any one should be so foolish to think that custom will render that state more tolerable, he will find a terrible confutation of his vain fancy. Indeed, continuance under light evils may arm the mind with patience to bear them; but in great extremities it makes the evil more ponderous and intolerable. He that is tortured with the stone, or on the rack, the longer the torture continues, the less able he is to sustain it. In short, as the joy of heaven is infinitely more ravishing, that the blessed are without fear of losing it; so the misery of hell is proportionably tormenting, that the damned are absolutely destitute of hopes of release. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," who lives for ever, and will punish for ever incorrigible sinners?

There are some who strongly fancy, it is not consistent with divine justice to inflict an eternal punishment for temporary sins. Therefore they soften the sentence, by interpreting the words of Christ, "these shall go into everlasting punishment," of the annihilation of impenitent sinners; that is, they shall be for ever deprived of heaven, but not suffer torments for ever.

To this there is a clear answer: 1. The direct "opposition between everlasting punishment, and everlasting life, in the words of Christ, is a convincing argument they are to be understood in the same extent for an absolute eternity. And the words in the revelation are so express, that they admit no mollifying interpretation, "they are tormented day and night, for ever and ever:" which necessarily infer, the tormented have life and sense for ever. Now that in scripture it is evident, that God hath decreed and denounced eternal punishment to obstinate sinners, is suffi-

cient to satisfy all inquiries about the justice of it: for divine justice is the correspondence of God's will and actions with the perfections of his holy nature. From hence we may infer with invincible evidence, that whatever he pronounces in judgment, and consequently inflicts, is most righteous. The truth is, we may as easily conceive there is no God, as that God is unjust; because absolute rectitude is an inseparable perfection of his nature. Thus the apostle with abhorrence rejects the question, "is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" Rom. 3. 5, 6. That were to deny him to be God, who is the Creator, and King, and Judge of the world, It is a full reply to all the pitiful shifts that are made use of to elude the plain meaning of the eternal judgment that will pass upon the wicked: "shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?" Job 4. 17. The reprobates have now some bold advocates, that plead those things for favour to them, which they will not dare to plead for themselves at the last day. The holy judge will then cut off all their excuses, and reduce them to a defenceless silence, before he cuts them off. "God will be justified in his sentence, and overcome when he judgeth."

The righteousness of the proceedings at the last day, in determining the wicked to a state of everlasting torments, has been considered in the Discourse on Judgment, and will farther appear by the following considerations.

1. The wisdom of God requires, that the punishment threatened in his law, as it must be so firmly decreed, that all obstinate rebels shall of necessity undergo it, so it must incomparably exceed all temporal evils, to which men may be exposed for their obedience to the divine commands, otherwise the threatening would not be an effectual restraint from sin: for the propinquity of an evil makes a strong impression on the mind, and a present fear makes a person solicitous to avoid the incursion of what is ready to seize on him, without forecasting to prevent an evil looked on at a distance. Therefore that the sanction of the divine law may preserve the precepts inviolable, that there may be a continual reverence of it, and a fixed resolution in the heart not to transgress, the penalty threatened must be in its own nature so terrible, that the fear of it may conquer the apprehension of all present evils that can be inflicted to constrain us to sin.

Therefore our Saviour warns his disciples, "fear not them that can kill the body" (make that part die that is mortal) "but fear him that after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." Now if the threatening of an everlasting hell, through infidelity and inconsideration, be not effectual in the minds of men to restrain them from sin; if temporary torments in the next state were only threatened, which are infinitely more easy and tolerable, carnal sinners would follow the swinge of their corrupt appetites, and commit iniquity with greediness: this would seem to reflect upon the wisdom of the lawgiver, as if he were defective in not binding his subjects firmly to their duty, and the ends of government would not be obtained.

2. God, as the sovereign ruler of the world, has established an inseparable connexion between the choice and actions of men here, and their future condition for ever. The promised reward of obedience is so excellent and eternal, that all the allurements of the world vanish in comparison with it: and there is such an infallible assurance of this reward in the word of God, that all, and only those who sincerely obey his commands, shall enjoy it in the future state; that a serious believer who ponders things, cannot be diverted from his duty by present temptations. Besides, by a chain of consequences sinful pleasures are linked with eternal punishment threatened in the divine law; and he that will enjoy forbidden pleasures, binds himself to suffer all the pains annexed to them. Now when God has, from his excellent goodness and undeserved mercy, assured men of the glory and joys of heaven that are unspeakable and eternal, upon the gracious terms of the gospel; and, upon their despising it, threatened eternal misery, if men obstinately neglect so great salvation; how reasonable is it they should inherit their own choice? Those who do not seek the kingdom of heaven, cannot escape hell, but by eternal consequence it will be their portion. There is no middle state in the next world, no tolerable mediocrity, but two contrary states; yet alike in this, that the happiness and misery are equally eternal: and it is just, that all who neglect eternal life, should suffer eternal death; for it is the natural and necessary consequence of their option: therefore sinners are charged with extreme madness, "to wrong their own souls, and to love death." Prov. 8. 26.

3. It will appear how unqualified the damned are for the least

favour, if we consider their continual hatred and blasphemies of God. The seeds of this are in wicked obstinate sinners here, who are styled "haters of God;" but in the damned this enmity is direct and explicit, the fever is heightened into a frenzy, the blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversation. Our Saviour tells us, that in hell there "is weeping and gnashing of teeth;" extreme sorrow, and extreme fury. Despair and rage are the proper passions of lost souls. For when the guilty sufferers are so weak, that they cannot by patience endure their torments, nor by strength resist the power that inflicts them, and are wicked and stubborn, they are irritated by their misery, and foam out blasphemies against the righteous judge. If their rage could extend to him, and their power were equal to their desires, they would dethrone the Most High. Hatred takes pleasure in revenge, either real or imaginary: and although God is infinitely above the transports of their fury, and all their rancorous imprecations are reflexively pernicious to themselves, like arrows shot against the sun, that fall down upon their heads that shot them; yet they are always venting their malice against the just power that torments them. It is said of the worshippers of the beast, "that they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains." Rev. 16. 10, 11. The torment and blasphemies of those impenitent idolaters, are a true representation of the state of the damned. From hence it appears they are the proper objects of revenging justice. How can we reasonably conceive, that God, in favour to the reprobates, should cross the established order of creation? For two ranks of beings were made, the material, of perishing principles, the spiritual, of an immortal duration: and will God withdraw his conservative power of the guilty soul in its immortality, and to put an end to its deserved misery, and self-tormenting reflections, annihilate it? If a criminal were justly condemned to a severe punishment, and should contumeliously and fiercely reproach the prince, by whose authority he was condemned, could it be expected there should be a mitigation of the sentence? And is it a thought consistent with the reasonable mind, that the righteous judge of the world will reverse or mitigate the sentence against the damned, who blaspheme his majesty and justice? And if they were as omnipotent to effect, as they are malicious to desire, would destroy his being. It is true, the divine threatening does not bind God

to a rigorous execution of it upon sinners: he has declared, if "sinners will turn from their evil ways, he will repent of the evil he purposed to do unto them." Jer. 26. 3. But when threatenings are part of the laws whereby men are governed, it is congruous to the wisdom and justice of the lawgiver to execute them in their full force upon the obstinate offenders; withal considering the inflicting of them is so far from working any ingenuous change in those rebels, that thereby they become more fierce and obdurate.

Lastly, The immense guilt that adheres to sin, requires a proportion in the punishment. It is a rule in all courts of judicature, that the degrees of an offence arise according to the degrees of dignity of the person offended. Now the majesty of God is truly infinite, against whom sin is committed; and consequently the guilt of sin exceeds our boundless thoughts. This is the reason of the sentence, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The curse threatened, includes the first and the second death. What a dishonour is it to the "God of glory," that proud dust should fly in his face, and control his authority? What a provocation, that the reasonable creature, that is naturally and necessarily a subject, should despise the divine law and lawgiver? Though carnal minds alleviate the guilt of sin, yet weighed "in the scales of the sanctuary," it is found so heavy, that no punishment inflicted on sinners exceeds, either in the degrees or duration, the desert of sin.

God's justice is not satisfied in depriving them of heaven, but inflicts the most heavy punishment upon sense and conscience in the damned; for as the soul and body in their state of union in this life were both guilty, the one as the guide, the other as the instrument of sin; so it is equal, when reunited, they should feel the penal effects of it. Sinners shall then be tormented wherein they were most delighted; they shall be invested with those objects that will cause the most dolorous perceptions in their sensitive faculties. The "lake of fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness for ever," are words of a terrible signification. But no words can fully express the terrible ingredients of their misery: the punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God's majesty that is provoked, and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessary

in the works of sin; so its capacious faculties shall be far more tormented than the limited faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be transmittted through the glass of conscience, and concentred upon damned spirits: the fire without is not so tormenting as the fire within them. How will the tormenting passions be inflamed? What rancour, reluctance, and rage against the just power that sentenced them to hell? What impatience and indignation against themselves for their wilful sins, the just cause of it? How will they curse their creation, and wish their utter extinction, as the final remedy of their misery? But all their ardent wishes are in vain; for the guilt of sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell; as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer those torments, which the strength and patience of an angel cannot bear one hour.

CHAP. III.

Practical inferences. The tender mercies of God to men, in revealing the prepared plagues for sinners, to prevent their misery. Carnal men are more capable of conceiving the torments of hell, than the joys of heaven. They are more apt to be moved by them. The desperate folly of sinners, to choose the pleasures of sin, notwithstanding the dreadful and everlasting torments that follow sin. The steadfast belief and serious consideration of eternal death, the wages of sin, is a prevailing motive to abhor and forsake it. Our dear obligations to our Saviour, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

I SHALL now draw some practical inferences, and conclude this subject.

1. From the revelation in scripture of the dreadful punishment prepared for unreformed sinners in the next state, we may understand the tender mercies of God to men; how willing he is they should be saved, who are so wilful to be damned. Hell is represented to them by the most violent figures, to terrify their imaginations, and strongly affect their minds, that "they may flee from the wrath to come." God counsels, commands, entreats, urges sinners to be wise, to foresee and prevent the evil that every hour is approaching to them; and with compassion and indignation laments their misery, and reproaches their folly in bringing it upon themselves. The divine mercy is as eminently and apparently declared to men in the present corrupt state, in threatening hell to excite their fear, as in promising heaven to allure their hopes. For if carnal indulgent sinners are not roused by a quick apprehension of hell, they will securely enjoy their pernicious pleasures, and despise the blessed reward, and heaven would be "as empty of human souls as it is full of glory."

(1.) Because they are more capable to conceive of the torments of hell, than the joys of heaven. Storms and darkness are more easily drawn by a pencil, than a clear calm day. Fire

mixed with brimstone, is very painful to sense; and the fancy strongly represents its vehemence in tormenting the body: and what misery the incessant remorse of the guilty conscience will cause in the damned hereafter, is in part understood by the secret accusations and twinges of conscience in self-condemning sinners here. But they are absolutely strangers to the joys of the Holy Ghost, to the delights of the soul in communion with God, and to peace of conscience in his favour. They cannot without experience, "know how good the Lord is," no more than see a taste. To discourse to them of spiritual pleasures that flow from the divine presence, of the happiness of the saints "that are before the throne of God, and serve him in his temple," is to speak with the tongue of an angel * unintelligible things. Their minds and language are confined to sensible things. The "natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." There may be in the carnal mind a conception of heaven, as a sanctuary wherein they may be secured from the wrath of God, and some smothering confused thoughts of its felicity, as the idea of light and colours in one blind from his birth; but only "the pure in heart can see God," as in the perfect vision of glory hereafter, so in the imperfect reflection of it here.

(2.) Carnal men are more disposed to be wrought upon, by representing the torments of hell, than the joys of heaven. For we cannot love but what is known, nor enjoy but what is loved. And as the purification of the heart from vicious affections, is an excellent means to clear the mind; so the illustration of the mind is very influential to warm the heart. The true conception of heaven in its amiable excellencies, would powerfully and sweetly ravish the affections; and of this, prepared souls are only capable. But those who are sensual, are without relish of spiritual happiness, and are allured or terrified only with what is pleasant or painful to flesh.

It is recorded as the unparalleled folly of Nero, † that when he was ready to cut his own throat, to avoid the fury of the multitude, he broke forth into great expressions of sorrow, what an

* Si frigido loquar, nescit quod loquor. *Aug.*

† Idemtidem dictitans, qualis artifex pereo! *Suet.*

excellent artist he died! It was not the loss of the Roman empire that so much troubled him, as that so much skill in music died with him. He valued himself more as a fidler, than an emperor. Thus carnal men with a folly infinitely more prodigious, when death is near, are not so much affected with the loss of the crown of glory, and the kingdom of heaven, as with their present leaving this world and its vanities. This makes death intolerably bitter. Till the love of God purifies the heart, the fruition of his presence is not esteemed nor desired. A seraphim sent from the presence of God with a flaming coal from the altar, touched the lips of the holy prophet, and his heart was presently melted into a compliance with the divine will. But if a rebel angel, that burns with another fire than of divine love, were dispatched from hell with a coal from that altar, where so many victims are offered to divine justice as there are damned souls, and touched obdurate sinners, that they might have a lively sense what it is to burn for ever, it were the most congruous and effectual means to reclaim them: like stubborn metals, they are only made pliant by the fire. From what has been said, we may observe the heavenly harmony between mercy and justice in God: he is the Father of mercy, it is his natural offspring, his primary inclination to the creature; and the threatening of vengeance against sinners, is a gracious design to constrain them with humility and repenting affections to seek his favour. Briefly, his severity and flaming displeasure never destroys sinners, but to revenge the abuse of his neglected benignity and clemency.

2. This shows the woful depravation of the minds and wills of men, that choose sin, when thinly painted over with pleasure, notwithstanding the most dreadful and durable torments, the certain consequences of it. Desperate folly! either they believe, or do not, the eternal torment of hell. If they do not, how prodigious is their impiety? If they do, it is more prodigious they dare indulge their vicious affections. A wicked believer is more monstrous and guilty than a wicked infidel.

In some there is atheism full of folly, or folly full of atheism, that they will not believe the prepared plagues for the wicked in the next state, because they have no sensible proof of them. Reason, assisted by divine revelation, affords so clear an evidence of the future state, and the rewards and punishments in it, that

if any sincerely apply themselves to consider things, he will receive the most affective conviction of them. It is true, there is not sensible evidence; for God will try our faith before he satisfies our sight: partly, that we may honour his veracity, by yielding a firm assent to his word, before the actual accomplishment of what is promised or threatened; and partly, that our obedience may be voluntary and unconstrained, that his goodness may take its rise to reward us. But these presumptuous infidels live as if they had no spirit, nothing of understanding in them: they are wholly under the dominion of sense, as if they were free and lawless, independent and unaccountable; as if the most high Governor of the world were an inferior being, without power and justice to vindicate the honour of his despised Deity. They do not fear hell, but are afraid they should be fearful of it. This is such a piece of folly (but infinitely more woful) as that of the West-Indians, who at their first invasion by the Spaniards, were so terrified by their glittering swords, that they presently fled, and very considerately resolved to hide themselves in the day, and assault their enemies in the night. They were fearful to see their danger, and rash to encounter it, and fighting in the dark were killed in the dark. The threatenings of eternal death are the brandishing "of God's glittering sword" before he strikes; and sensual infidels are afraid lest the belief of those terrible truths should pierce into their breasts; therefore are utterly averse from due considering their danger, and will not foresee what they shall certainly suffer. It is in vain to offer arguments to convince them; for they are as deaf as adders to the wisest instructions, till sense extort an acknowledgment from them. They have hardened their hearts and faces against all reproofs, and by an open contempt of scripture-threatenings, are past reclaiming. They are now fearless of that judgment, the thoughts whereof make the devils tremble: but the time will shortly come, when the word of the righteous God, which now they despise, shall irresistibly and immediately, like lightning shot from heaven, destroy them. There are many degrees of sin, many steps in the descent to hell; but the lowest and nearest the gate of that infernal prison, is the scornful derision of God's dreadful preparations for the wicked.

Others in the christian church who profess and presume they are true believers, yet by living indulgently in their pleasant or

profitable sins, discover their faith is counterfeit, or such a superficial assent to the truth of God's word that is without efficacy, and will not avail them at the last. Unfeigned faith of the divine threatenings, produces such a fear as would make men circumspect over their hearts and ways. The fear of a present destructive evil controls the most eager appetites. It is recorded, that when the army of Israel was in pursuit of the Philistines, Saul, to complete his victory, forbad, upon pain of death, that any should taste food till the sun was down. In the chase of their enemies they pass through a wood dropping with honey; yet notwithstanding their hunger and faintness, and the easy provisions before them, no man so much as tasted it: "for the people feared the king's oath." And did men truly believe and fear the law of God, threatening hell for sin, would they dare to commit it, though invited by the pleasant temptations? Nay, not only a strong fear, but the mere suspicion of great danger, will restrain the most vehement desires of nature. What person, though inflamed with thirst, would drink a glass of cool liquor, if he suspected that deadly poison were mixed with it? And if men were persuaded that sin is attended with eternal death, would "they drink in iniquity like water?" The devils themselves are not able to conquer the fear of judgment to come, they believe and tremble: therefore when it is not active upon the conscience, it is either because men do not believe it, or they fancy that retaining their beloved lusts, they may obtain an easy absolution, and escape the damnation of hell, which the eternal Judge has declared shall be the punishment of all that will not cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye, separate their dearest corruptions from them. Astonishing perverseness! How many will not discern nor censure that folly in themselves, which they will condemn in others for extreme madness? If one riotously lavishes away his estate, and for the short pleasure of a few years, be reduced with the prodigal to extreme poverty, and to loathsome imprisonment all his life after, would he not be esteemed to have been besides himself? Yet this is a very tolerable case, in comparison of exposing the soul to eternal vengeance, for the pleasures of sin that are but for a season.

3. Let us steadfastly believe, and frequently consider, that "Eternal death is the wages of sin," that we may renounce it

with the deepest abhorrence, and forsake it for ever. We are assured, from the wisdom and compassion of our Saviour, that it is a powerful means to mortify the inclination to sin, and to induce us to prevent and resist all temptations. The subtile tempter cannot present any motives, that to a rectified mind will make sin eligible. Let the scales be even, and put into one all the delights of the senses, all the pleasures and honours of the world, that are the elements of carnal felicity, how light are they against the heavenly glory? Will the gain of the world compensate the loss of the soul and salvation for ever? If there were any possible comparison between deluding transient vanities, and the happiness that is substantial and satisfying for ever, the choice would be more difficult, and the mistake less culpable; but they vanish into nothing in the comparison. According to the judgment of sense, would any one choose the enjoyment of the most exquisite pleasures for a year, and afterwards be content to burn in a furnace for a day; much less to enjoy them for a day, and to burn for a year? What stupid brutes are they, who for momentary delights incur the fiery indignation of God for ever? Try but the finger with the flames of a candle, you will soon discover your weakness. Will the remembrance of sensual delights allay the torments of the damned? When carnal lusts are most inflamed, and objects are present, pain will extinguish all the pleasures of the senses: and if actual enjoyment cannot afford delight when the body is under a disease, will the reflections upon past pleasures in the fancy and memory refresh the damned in their extreme torments? No, the remembrance will infinitely increase their anguish, that for such seeming and short pleasures, they brought upon themselves misery intolerable, without ease or end. O that men would strip sin of its disguises, and wash off its flattering colours, and look into its odious nature, and to the consequential evils of it in the next world! O that they would consider they hang by slender strings (a little breath that expires every minute) over the bottomless pit, and that within a little while nothing will remain of the pleasures of sin, but the undying worm, and the ever-living flames! This would be a means to raise and preserve in them an invincible resolution and reluctancy against all temptations to sin and provoke God. But how hardly are men induced to ex-

ercise their minds on this terrible object! They think least of hell, who have most reason to consider it.

To this I must add, that the mere fear of hell, and the judicial impression upon conscience from it, is not sufficient to convert men to God. For that servile affection, though it may stop a temptation, and hinder the eruption of a lust into the gross act, yet does not renew the nature, and make men holy and heavenly. There may be a respective dislike of sin, with a direct affection to it. Besides, that religion that is the mere effect of fear, will be, according to the nature of its principle, with resistance and trouble, wavering and inconstant: for tormenting fear is repugnant to the human nature, and will be expelled if possible. In short, the fear of hell may be only a natural affection, that recoils from what is painful to sense. * Therefore it is the great design of the gospel, by the fear of hell, as a powerful preparative, to make way for the love of God, who offers pardon and indemnity to all returning sinners, and for the hope of heaven, the blessed reward promised to them. No offers of mercy will prevail to make sinners to yield themselves, till they are stormed by the terrors of the Lord. But when the fear of hell has made a breach, divine grace enters and takes possession. As the virtue of the loadstone, when encompassed and armed with iron, is increased, and draws a far greater weight than when it is naked and single; thus the attractives of heaven are more powerful to move the hearts of men, when enforced from the terrors of hell. Now the love of God, and the hope of heaven, are spiritual affections; and the obedience that flows from them is voluntary from the entire consent of the soul, and persevering.

Lastly, From the consideration of the punishment determined for sin, we may understand how dear our engagements are to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Rector and Judge of the world would not release the guilty without a ransom, nor the surety without satisfaction; and the Son of God most willingly and compassionately gave his precious blood the price of our redemption. He obtained the Spirit of holiness, to illuminate our minds, to incline our wills, to sanctify our affections, without whose omnipotent grace, neither the hopes nor fears of things spiritual and future,

* Nisi timore incipiat homo Deum colere, non perveniet ad amorem. *Aug.*

would ever have cleansed and changed our hearts and lives. We are naturally as senseless as the dead, as to what concerns our everlasting peace, blind and brutish, and without fear should plunge ourselves into destruction, if the Spirit of power, and of a sound mind, did not quicken and direct us in the way to everlasting life. O that we might feel our dear obligations to him who has "delivered us from the wrath to come," and purchased for us a felicity perfect, and without end! I would not lessen and disparage one divine work, to advance and extol another; but it is a truth that shines with its own light, and is declared by our Saviour, that our redemption from hell to heaven, is a more excellent benefit than our creation; in as much as our well-being is better than our being, and eternal misery is infinitely worse than mere not being. Our Saviour speaks of Judas, "It had been better for him if he had never been born." How engaging is the love of Christ, who raised us from the bottom of hell to the bosom of God, the seat of happiness! If his perfections were not most amiable and attractive, yet that he died for us, should make him the object of our most ardent affections. "To those who believe, he is precious;" to those who have felt their undone condition, and that by his merits and mediation are restored to the favour of God, that are freed from tormenting fears, and revived with the sweetest hopes, he is and will be eminently and eternally precious. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

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